CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teacher quality is a major issue in the field of education and a topic for public discussion. Studies propose that at a time when test scores are a common measure of academic success, teachers are among the most important factors impacting student outcomes (Akbari, 2010; Barnatt, 2008; Rice, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Sanders, 1998, 2000; Ferguson, 1991). In the same line, Sanders (1998) argued that the "single largest factor affecting academic growth of populations of students is differences in effectiveness of individual classroom teachers" (p.27). Alexander and Fuller (2005) maintained that "few educators, economists, or politicians would argue with the contention that all things being equal, highly qualified teachers produce greater student achievement than comparatively less qualified teachers" (p.2). As Barnatt (2008) noted, "whether or not these measures of success are adequate for the complex task of assessing teaching and learning, the implications of these findings unify policy makers, politicians, educators, and parents in calling for well prepared, high quality teachers"(p.2).

According to Ingersoll (1996), there are two broad elements that contribute to teacher quality, i.e. teacher preparation and qualifications, and teaching practices. The first is concerned with preservice learning (postsecondary education, certification) as well as continued learning (professional development, mentoring). The second is related to real practices and behaviors that teachers display in their classrooms. It should be noted that, the mentioned components of teacher quality are dependent on excellent teacher preparation and qualifications which should lead to desirable teaching behaviors and practices.

University- and college-based teacher education, as a main avenue of teacher preparation, is under pressure to provide student teachers with the knowledge and skills required to satisfy the demands of today's classrooms. This comprises preparing student teachers to efficiently analyze classroom data to decide on practice sessions (Barnatt, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Weinbaum et al., 2004). There is a large body of research (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1991; Darling-Hammond & Hudson, 1990; Grossman, 1990; Evertson, Hawley, and Zlotnik, 1985) that shows that in order to teach effectively, one should be trained. Teachers who have participated in teacher training programs are more effective, have more confidence and are able to work successfully with the English language learners in comparison with those who have not been trained at all. Studies have indicated that trained teachers can better introduce and conclude lessons, (Denton & Lacina, 1984) communicate efficiently with students and meet their needs and interests and teach in a manner that expedites higher order learning (Grossman, 1990; Ashton & Crocker, 1987). Thus, the quality of education is profoundly affected by the quality of teachers; while the quality of teachers depends to a great extent upon the quality of education (which includes both preservice and inservice) they receive (Ingersoll, 1996).

Training of language teachers has been the center of attention in the foreign and second language teaching profession (Freeman & Freeman, 1994; Wallace, 1991; Richards & Nunan, 1990). Freeman and Freeman (1994) mentioned the importance of teacher training programs for producing competent language teachers. They argued that since teachers' teaching practices are influenced by the content of training and by the way they themselves are taught, teacher preparation must be given necessary importance. According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), "teacher education has been a

much done but relatively little studied in the field" (p.398). Velez-Rendon (2002) noted that,

> We need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. Specifically, we need to understand more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practices, and how that knowledge and those thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job (p.465).

As Grosse (1991; 1993) and Davis (1998) argued, the methods course is the primary means for pedagogical instruction in the majority of EFL/ESL teacher preparation programs helping develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness of teachers. According to Garfinkel (1976), traditionally, the methods course has examined the historical and theoretical foundations of language teaching, classroom techniques derived from these foundations, and resources for professional development. However, current trends in education propose that the methods course should be based upon knowledge of what an ESL/EFL teacher must know and do in order to be effective (Grosse, 1991). As Grosse argued, "identification of this knowledge base has been imprecise at best in TESOL as well as other educational fields. In spite of the importance of the methods course in teacher preparation, very little is known about the precise workings of this course in TESOL or other areas of teacher education." (p.29) According to Zeichner (1988), "what happens inside these courses defines teacher education's contribution to teacher's learning" (p.33).

Context of the Preservice EFL Teacher Education in Iran

The education of English teachers in Iran is considered an important cultural, political and social issue (Beh-Afarin, 2007; Menshari, 1992). Since English is not a second language in Iran, exposure to it in natural settings is very limited. The most common

mode of exposure to English language input is through formal instruction in English classes. Every activity that happens in the classroom directly affects students' learning of English. Thus, the importance of the teacher in the English learning process cannot be underestimated.

High school English teachers in Iran are educated in teacher training universities and university faculties of education/ humanities, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. There are three different academic routes to the language teaching profession. Students can come through a degree in English Language Teaching (ELT), English Language and Literature (ELL) or English Translation (ET). These routes (ELT, ELL and ET) are generally referred to as English Majors. Those who are majoring in ELL and ET need to undergo a one-year pre-employment training program administered by the Human Resource Development Bureau of the Ministry of Education, which includes psychological and pedagogical courses as well as a practicum, prior to starting their teaching profession. The ELT majors have the aforementioned components in their Bachelors degree curriculum and they start their teaching profession right after the graduation (see Figure 1.1).
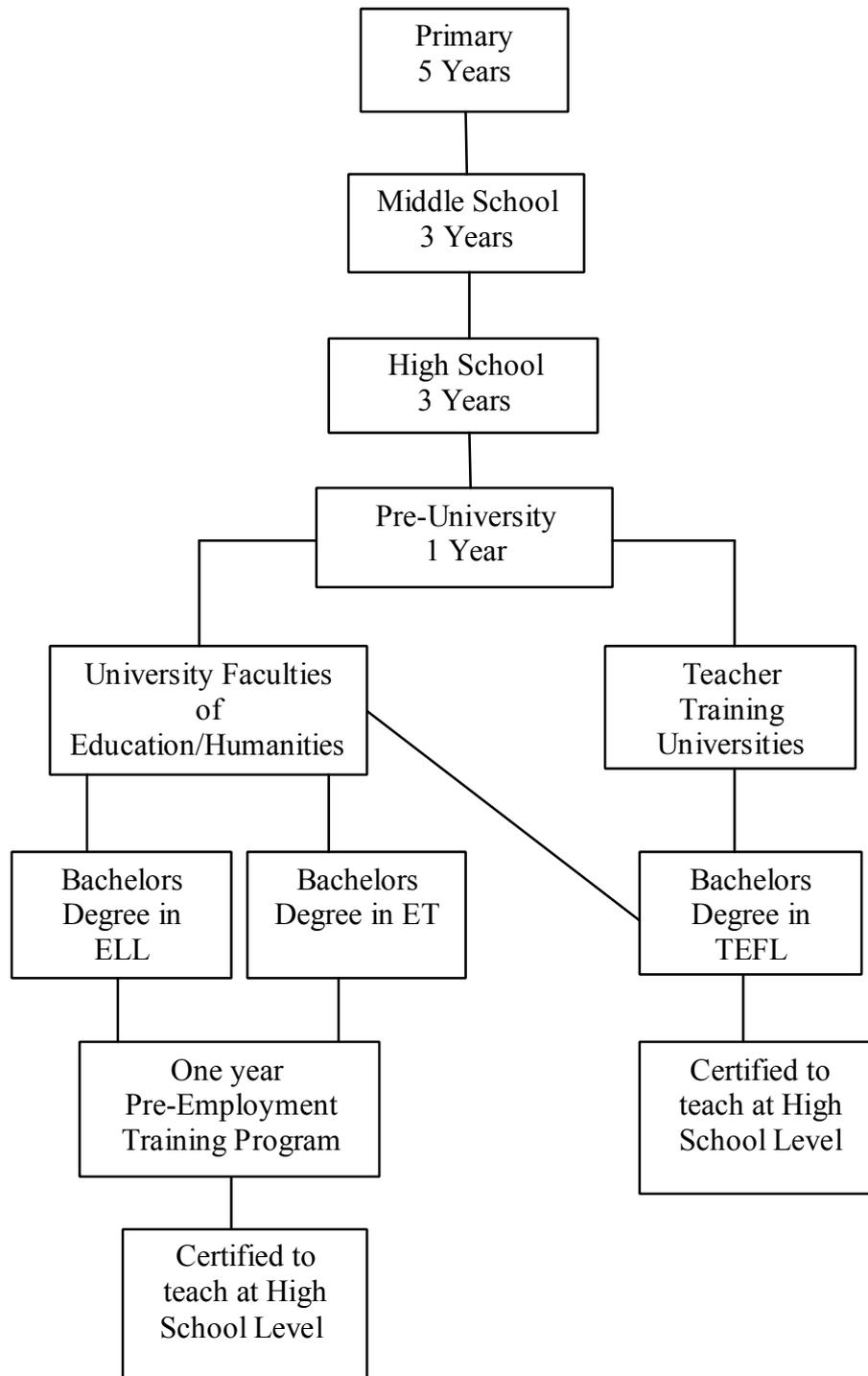
Figure 1.1. Preservice EFL Teacher Education for the High School English Teachers in Iran.

In Iran, the curriculum of English Majors comprises of three main components: language component, science component, and practicum component (the curriculum of ELL and ET majors does not include the latter component; instead, practicum is a part of the one-year pre-employment training program). The language component "aims at

improving the content knowledge, i.e., students' general knowledge of English, or their communicative competence" (Rahimi, 2008, p.7). Courses on conversation, listening comprehension, vocabulary and idioms, pronunciation, reading, writing, and grammar help develop the students' English language proficiency; while literature courses provide them with insights into foreign culture. "From a theoretical perspective, EFL teachers require specialized knowledge about language, teaching theories and beliefs, and pedagogy." In the science component, courses on teaching methodology, testing and research methods provide students with methodological and pedagogical knowledge, while courses on linguistics supply knowledge about language(s). From a practical aspect, "EFL teachers have to acquire proper skills and knowledge to learn how to teach in a real context, the school setting". The courses presented in the practicum component are aimed at developing and expanding "the practical knowledge of schools (e.g., the learners and their characteristics, teaching materials, assessment, parents) through observation, socialization, and interaction" (*Ibid*). It is necessary to note that the focus of the present study is the EFL methods course which is part of the science component in the curriculum of English Majors in Iran.

Context of the EFL Methods Course in Iran

The EFL methods course is a four-credit hour compulsory course for all English Major students in Iran. The course is extended over a period of sixteen weeks, in which the first half of the session is focused on building knowledge about second and foreign language teaching methods and skills along with the assigned readings and individual projects. The second half of the session deals with the practical aspect of TEFL in which the students are required to put the content knowledge they acquired in class into practice. In spite of the importance of the EFL methods course in preservice EFL teacher education, at the time when this study was being done, to the best of the

researcher's knowledge, nothing was written on the content and syllabi of the EFL methods course, its contribution to teachers' learning and practices, and the process of the use or adaptation of the EFL teaching methods by high school English teachers in actual classes in Iran. The details of the EFL methods course in Iran are discussed at a greater length in chapter four (see pages 97-103).

The researcher could only find one study investigating the current preservice EFL teacher education models practiced at major universities and teacher training centers in Iran carried out by Beh-Afarin (2007). His research revealed that Iran's preservice EFL teacher education practice needs effective operational objectives, redefined curriculum knowledge base, guided practice and a statutory tutelage. In his study, he requested for more practical training, more qualitative certification, information raising and accreditation of teacher education programs. While Beh-Afarin has examined EFL teacher education broadly, his study did not focus on the EFL methods course specifically. There is thus a need to investigate the conduct of the methods course and its impact on teaching practices after the students graduate from the program.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of 'method' in English language teaching has been a problematic notion in recent literature in TESOL. In the last two decades, scholars and educators have moved from searching for the best method to understanding that there is no single best method (Prabhu, 1990); to questioning the concept of method (Pennycook, 1989); and to move beyond methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b) in the 'postmethod era' (Brown, 2002). However, the notion of 'methods' is still popular in EFL teacher education textbooks

(Atai, 2009; Zhao, 2007; Bell, 2003, 2007), even in this 'postmethod condition' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994).

Although some scholars (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 1999) confirmed the importance of teachers knowing different language teaching methods, and although it is proposed that teachers' educational experiences influence teachers' decision making (Johnson, 1992; Freeman, 1991), there is a paucity of studies on the impact of EFL methods courses on the practices of high school English teachers. Little is known of the adaptation of the methods by English teachers in the classroom. In fact, teachers' voices on the contribution of the EFL methods course to teachers' practices, the problems teachers face, and the use or adaptation of the language teaching methods by the teachers in the practical realities of their classrooms is not fully heard.

Empirical studies (Grosse, 1991; Davis, 1998) of the curriculum and content of the TESOL/TEFL methods course of a number of teacher preparation programs provided information about the content of the TESOL/TEFL methods course, its goals, requirements, instructional materials, the processes used to construct knowledge in the course as well as the common problems. However, an unresearched aspect of these studies was that whether such knowledge acquired by student teachers in the TESOL/TEFL methods course helped their classroom practices once they graduate.

This study is thus a contribution to the field of TESOL/TEFL teacher education as it attempts to relate the EFL methods course to the classroom realities that teachers must face after graduation from preservice teacher education programs. Thus, the gap that the study also addresses involves the issue of use or adaptation of the methods by

the high school English teachers and some of the contextual influences within specific EFL setting.

The Purpose of the Study

The present study is aimed at exploring high school English teachers' conceptions and experiences about the contribution of the EFL methods course in providing teachers with the knowledge and skills of various language teaching methods. It investigates the content, goals, and artifacts of the EFL methods course and the contribution of this course to teachers' practices. It also looks at the issue of use or adaptation of the language teaching methodologies and examines how the knowledge and skills acquired by the high school English teachers in the EFL methods course, help their real teaching practices. The objectives of the study would be fulfilled to the extent possible through analysis of the EFL methods course syllabi, course artifacts, high school English textbooks, personal interviews with high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers as well as observation of practicing teachers. The following research questions served as the guiding framework for this study:

1. What were the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in the preservice EFL teacher education program in Iran?
2. How did the EFL methods course contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province?
3. How do high school English teachers in Semnan province, Iran use or adapt the language teaching methods in their classrooms?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The present study draws on the sociocultural perspectives of learning which focuses on the concept of learning as situational social practices (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Sociocultural theory views human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in social and physical contexts, and distributed across persons, tools, and activities (Johnson, 2006; Wertsch, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory of learning is in contrast with cognitive learning theories which consider learning as an internal psychological process which happens in the learner's mind and is separated from the social and physical contexts within which it happens (Johnson, 2006). Johnson claimed that based on the sociocultural theory of situated learning, "the knowledge of the individual is constructed through the knowledge of the communities of practice within which the individual participates" (p.237). According to her,

> Learning, therefore, is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity. And because social activities and the language used to regulate them are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways, both the physical tools and the language practices used by communities of practice gain their meaning from those who have come before (Johnson, 2006, p.238).

Traditionally, L2 teacher education has been shaped on the assumption that "teachers could learn about the content they were expected to teach (language) and teaching practices (how best to teach it) in their teacher education program, observe and practice it in the teaching practicum, and develop pedagogical expertise during the induction years of teaching" (Johnson, 2006, p.238). However, as Johnson maintained, the recent body of research on L2 teacher cognition (c.f. Borg, 2003; Johnson &

Golombek, 2003) has taken a very different stand on how teachers learn to do their work. According to her,

> L2 teacher's learning is considered as normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and later as teachers in the settings where they work. It describes L2 teacher's learning as socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricula, and setting. It shows L2 teachers as users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their L2 students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts (Johnson, 2006, p.239).

As Richards (2008) explained, from the sociocultural perspective, "teacher's learning is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice but as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes"(p.164). This epistemology of teacher's learning acknowledges that teachers have expertise that can be used to solve dilemmas that arise in their practice (Poehner, 2009).

According to Richards (2008), teacher's learning in second language teacher education programs occurs either in a university or a teacher education institution, or a school, and these various settings for learning create various potentials for learning. In addition he argued that,

> In one, the course room is a setting for patterns of social participation that can either enhance or inhibit learning. In the other, learning occurs through the practice and experience of teaching. Both involve induction to communities of practice, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept for learning takes place within organizational settings, which is socially constituted and which involves participants with a common interest collaborating to develop new knowledge and skills. In the course room, learning is contingent upon the discourse and activities that coursework and class participation involve. In the school, learning takes place through classroom experiences and teaching practice and

is contingent upon relationships with mentors, fellow novice teachers and interaction with experienced teachers in the school (Richards, 2008, p.165).

The idea of socially situated and negotiated learning, on which the present study drew on, can be best described by the model presented by Freeman and Johnson (1998) (see Figure 1.2.).
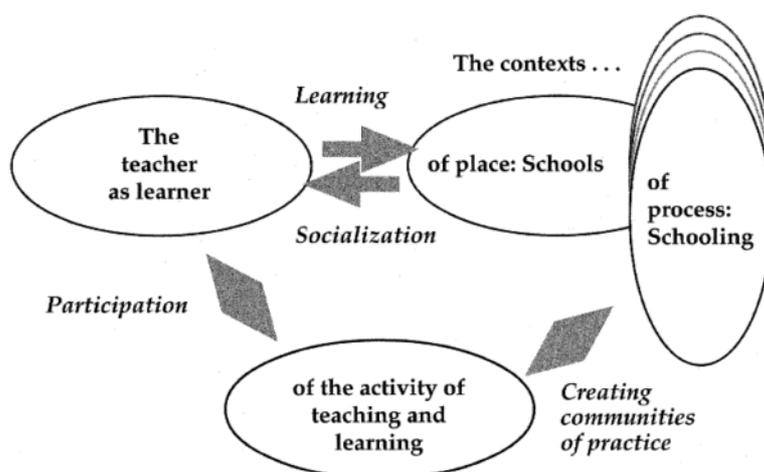

Figure1.2. Teacher's Learning as a Socially Negotiated Process. Adopted from "Reconceptualizing the Knowledge-Base of Language Teacher Education," by D. Freeman & K. E. Johnson, 1998, *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(3), p.406.

As Freeman and Johnson (1998) claimed, the process of teacher's learning "is a socially negotiated one, because teachers' knowledge of teaching is constructed through experiences in and with students, parents, and administrators as well as other members of the teaching profession" (p.410). Freeman and Johnson identified this process "as normative and lifelong" which is "built out of and through experiences in social contexts, as learners in classrooms and schools, and later as participants in professional programs". They continued that,

> Because we as teacher educators see teaching as much more than a set of discrete behaviors or routines that make classrooms run more smoothly, solutions no longer lie in the search for the most effective teaching behaviors or the best methods (see Prabhu, 1990). Rather we

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now accept that what may be effective in one classroom with one group of students may not be with another. We recognize teaching as more than the accumulation of research knowledge because it is evident that giving more research knowledge to teachers does not necessarily make them better practitioners. Learning to teach is a long-term, complex, developmental process that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p.402).

However, they expressed their suspicions about the current practices of language teacher education by mentioning that,

> Many language teacher education programs continue to operate under the assumption that they must provide teachers with a codified body of knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching; expose them to a range of teaching practices or methodologies; and provide a field experience in which they are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge in actual classroom settings (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p.402).

According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), "in shifting the conception of teaching from a behavioral view of what people do when they teach languages to a constructivist view of how people learn to teach" (p.402), the conversations in TESL/TEFL about the preparation, evaluation, mentoring, and licensure of teachers in the profession should be recasted.

From the classroom practices aspect, Johnson (1996) argued that teaching should be identified "as a socially constructed activity that requires the interpretation and negotiation of meanings embedded within the context of the classroom" (p.24). Atkinson (2002) proposed that teaching language should take place in real human contexts and interactions. Mondada and Doehler (2004) believed that language learning is situated in learners' social practice and interactions in social contexts. Their conversation analysis (CA) of the discourse in French as a Second Language classrooms, revealed that teacher's practices and behaviours are reflexively redefined

during the language learning task. This draws the attention to the fact that how teachers teach, with methods or approaches, is subject to the students' perception of the learning activity.

The present study draws on the sociocultural theory of situational learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) to see how the EFL methods course contributes to the practices of high school English teachers and how the high school English teachers in Semnan Province, Iran use or adapt what they have acquired in the EFL methods course in the real context of their classrooms.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study provide some insights for preservice EFL teacher education programs in Iran. It promises some implications for renewing the existing EFL methods courses. The feedback can be used in gearing the content and methodology of the course to the actual needs of teachers. The results reveal potential strengths and weaknesses of the course as perceived by the graduates and lecturers and could aid the policy makers to formulate better policies and provide more practical and useful courses in order that EFL teachers' professional needs can be better met. The decisions may be on which areas need to be improved or revised. Also, the findings may indicate to the training personnel on areas of the training where the teachers need further training. In brief, the findings would assist teacher educators and administrators in improving both the present EFL methods course and designing future training programs so that the trainees would benefit from the training to the fullest, which in turn would help them in improving the language proficiency of their students.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the body of research in the field of teacher education in EFL contexts. The context in which the research took place is not one that is usually represented in the field of TESOL. This study thus contributes to our knowledge of this context and to the influence of the context on teachers' sense-making.

Definition of the Key Terms

Adaptation: In biology, an organism adapts itself to a new environment when its context changes. This metaphor has been used to explain how a high school English teacher as an organism who is living in a particular context, i.e. the EFL methods course, adapts, relocates and recontextualizes the language teaching methodologies when s/he enters a new environment which is the classroom.

EFL: This term, English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the teaching of English to speakers of other languages where English is neither the language of instruction in schools nor an official language.

High School: This is a three-year stage covering grade 9 to Grade 11, from ages 14 to 17. Having finished middle school (*Rahnamayee*), students can proceed to high school (*Dabirestan*) choosing either the vocational/technical or academic branch. Students are required to complete 96 units in order to be awarded the High School Diploma. The high school graduates who are interested in higher education must complete one preparation year (*Pish Daneshgahi*) to be entitled for the university entrance examination known as *Konkur*. This nation-wide examination serves as the general National Entrance Examination for admission to universities.

Preservice EFL Teacher Education: It refers to the education which takes place prior to the first year of teaching. In Iran, there are three routes, English Language Teaching

(ELT), English Language and Literature (ELL) and English Translation (ET), leading to becoming a high school English teacher. The students in the aforementioned fields are referred to as English major students. Every English major student spends the first two years on studying general English. In the next two years, the student focuses on his/her specialized field of study. Those students majoring in ELT start their teaching profession right after the completion of their study. Those who are majoring in other than ELT need to undergo a one-year pre-employment training program administered by the Human Resource Development Bureau of the Ministry of Education, comprising of coursework and practicum.

Situated Learning: Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that learning should not be viewed as a simple transmission of abstract and decontextualised knowledge from one person to another. In fact, it is a social process in which knowledge is co-constructed. As Lave and Wenger maintained, such learning is situated in a specific context; in this study, the EFL methods course context as well as the actual classroom setting, and is embedded within a specific social and physical environment.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter two contains an extensive examination of literature relevant to this study. Chapter three explains the methodology of the research, instruments and data-gathering procedures used to collect the data. Chapter four deals with the findings from the analysis and evaluation of the data gathered from personal interviews, classroom observations and relevant EFL documents. Chapter five includes discussion of the findings, implications for the preservice EFL teacher education and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed previous studies with regards to EFL teaching methods and approaches and Preservice EFL teacher education. Under the EFL teaching methods and approaches, the researcher looked at (a) a concise history of language teaching (b) approach and method in language teaching, (c) Teachers and the implementation of methods and approaches, (d) The Postmethod Condition, and (e) rethinking of methods and the Postmethod Condition. In the section related to preservice EFL teacher education, she examined (a) models of language teacher education, (b) teacher knowledge base in EFL teacher education, (c) the curricular components of EFL teacher education, and (d) theory and practice in EFL language teacher education.

EFL Teaching Methods and Approaches

A Concise History of Language Teaching

The field of language teaching has been constantly in a state of transition. It was uninformed by "any scientifically established learning theory" from the time of Confucius (551- 479 BC) up to the early years of the twentieth century. With the increasing interest in psychology, learning theories suggested by psychologists began to inform many teaching practices. Consequently, language teaching practices were based more on psychological learning theories (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006, p.170).

Mackey (1950) who was one of the great scholars in the field of language pedagogy authored an article entitled "The meaning of method". In his work, he referred to the most important dilemma in the field of language teaching and maintained

that "no systematic reference to this body of knowledge" is available. According to him, "much of the field of language method has become a matter of opinion rather than of fact" (p.4). Mackey tried to look at method sensibly by identifying a number of traits for any method. He argued that, all teaching, either good or bad, should involve "some sort of selection, some gradation, and presentation." As Mackey maintained, selection is crucial since it is impossible "to teach the whole of a field of knowledge; gradation should be undertaken because it is impossible to teach all the selected materials at once; presentation makes it possible to communicate concepts interpersonally" (p.5).

The introduction of the notion of method provided new insight into the processes of language teaching (called methods), in the first half of the twentieth century (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006). However, as Simon (2010) argued, the significance connected to methods has had an unstable reputation over the years. According to him,

> While some language educators considered the method as all important, and the cause of success or failure in language learning, at the other extreme, methods were assigned little importance and considered merely as instruments in the hands of teachers or as inconsequent beside the quality of the learners. To worsen the situation further, the names of the methods have not been applied in a consistent and unambiguous way. Often, the methods did not correspond to clearly specified characteristics. Even the generic term 'method' was not unequivocal and the distinction between the terms 'approach' and 'method' remained blurred (Simon, 2010, p.8).

Approach and Method in Language Teaching

Discussions about the methods of language teaching and learning have been around "since the time of Comenius in the 17th century, if not before" (McKendry, 2009, p.1). Several scholars (Brown, 2002; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000;

Prabhu, 1990; Anthony, 1963) have attempted to distinguish between "approach" and "method" while defining language teaching methods. Anthony (1963) proposed a tripartite distinction of Approach, Method and Technique. As he argued "… techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach" (p.64). Prabhu (1990) considered method as "a set of activities to be carried out in the classroom" and "the theory, belief, or plausible concept that informs those activities" (p.162). Merging method and approach, Prabhu noted that a method "has more or less pedagogic power to influence teachers' subjective understanding of teaching" (p.175). According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), method is "a coherent set of links between principles and certain techniques and procedures" (p.xii). Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined method as "a specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of language and language learning" (p.245). Brown (2002) drew a distinction between method and approach by mentioning that a method is "a set of theoretically unified classroom techniques thought to be generalizable across a wide variety of contexts and audience" (p.12), and an approach is "the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom" (p.9).

In short, as Richards and Rodgers (2001) argued, the main differences between approach and method lie in the fact that approaches do not have a particularly prescribed set of techniques for language teaching. They are considered as belief systems that may inform methods or teachers' action in the classroom, while methods comprise of detailed information about the content, the roles of teachers and learners, and teaching procedures and techniques (cited in Zhao, 2007).

There are plenty of methods and approaches from which to select. The methods implemented to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have developed and increased rapidly in the past decades (Zhao, 2007).

The Grammar Translation Method was employed in the late nineteenth century, whereas the Direct Method moved beyond this tradition with the purpose of totally utilizing the target language. The Audio-Lingual Method substantially changed language teaching in the 1940s and 1950s with explorations in the field of applied linguistics. Communicative Language Teaching has been prevailing since 1970s with its efforts to concentrate on communicative competence (Brown, 2000). Of course, the mentioned methods are just four of the better-established ones; to these we can add Total Physical Response (TPR), Suggestopedia, and others (Brown, 2000). The recent research proposed that Content-Based Instruction (Oxford & Scarcella, 1992) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are more efficient (Nunan, 2004). In fact, the EFL and ESL teachers, teacher educators, and language teaching professionals have been searching for the best way to teach a second or foreign language. Within the last 15 years as Bell (2007) maintained, "ESL/EFL methodology has witnessed 'the search for the best method' (Prabhu, 1990), move 'beyond methods' (Richards, 1990) to the 'postmethod condition' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), and even proclaim the death of methods" (Brown, 2002) (p.135). However, as Block (2001) argued, "while method has been discredited at an etic level (that is, in the thinking and nomenclature of scholars) it certainly retains a great deal of vitality at the grass-roots, emic level (that is, it is still part of the nomenclature of lay people and teachers)" (p.72) (quoted in Bell, 2007). A concise overview of some of the most popular language teaching methods and approaches is given as follows.

Grammar Translation Method. This method was based on the traditional and classical method of teaching Greek and Latin. As Richards (2001) argued, in the 18th and 19th centuries, an adult was considered prepared to face the world and its challenges only if the person had learned classical literature of the Greeks and Romans

and mathematics. The aim of the Grammar Translation method was to enable learners to read and translate literary masterpieces and classics and not to speak a foreign language. This method was popular until the 1960s, but the evolving teaching methodology found many weaknesses in this method and therefore it was substituted by the Audio-lingual and Direct methods.

Direct Method. This method emerged as a reaction to the Grammar Translation Method. As Richards (2001) maintained, Gouin had been one of the first 19th century reformers to attempt to build a methodology around observation of a child's language learning. Other reformers toward the end of the century likewise turned their attention to naturalistic principles of language learning, and for this reason they are sometimes referred to as advocates of a 'natural' method. The supporters of the Natural Method argued that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learners' native tongue if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action. However, the Direct Method had its own drawbacks. It required teachers who were native speakers or who had native-like fluency in the foreign language. It was largely dependent on the teacher's skill, rather than on a textbook, and not all the teachers were proficient enough in the foreign language to adhere to the principles of the method. Although the Direct Method enjoyed popularity in Europe, not everyone had embraced it enthusiastically; in fact, by the 1920s, the use of the Direct Method declined.

Audio-lingual Method. The audio-lingual method is also known as 'the army method' because of the impact of the military. This method is the result of three historical conditions and the third factor of its emergence was the initiation of World War II. American soldiers were dispatched to war all over the world and there was a

need to provide them with basic verbal communication skills in a variety of foreign languages (Richards, 2001). As Richards maintained, since this was not the goal of conventional foreign language courses in the United States, new approaches were necessary. Drills and pattern practice, choral repetition, memorization, mimicry, and induction grammar process are distinctive features of the Audio-lingual Method. Dialogues also provide the means of contextualizing key structures and illustrate situations in which structures might be used as well as some cultural aspects of the target language. Dialogues are used for repetition and memorization. Audiolingualism reached its heyday in the 1960s; but, then came criticism on two fronts. On the one hand, the theoretical foundations of Audiolingualism were attacked as being unsound both in terms of language theory and learning theory. On the other hand, practitioners found that the practical results fell short of expectations. Students were often unable to transfer skills acquired through this method to real communication outside the classroom, and many found the experience of studying through this method boring and unsatisfactory.

Communicative Language Teaching. The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. CLT is best considered an approach rather than a method. It appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching - one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority (Richards, 2001). As Richards asserted, among the goals of CLT is the teaching of communicative competence. According to him, communicative competence comprises of the following aspects of language knowledge: "knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions; knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants; and knowing how to maintain communication despite

having limitations in one's language knowledge" (pp.70-71). CLT emphasizes interaction as both the means and the final goal of learning a language. The wide acceptance of the communicative approach and the relatively varied way in which it is interpreted and applied can be attributed to the fact that practitioners from different educational traditions can identify with it and interpret it in various ways. One of the distinctive features of CLT is its learner-centered and experience-based view of language teaching. CLT has been under critical scrutiny for many years (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Sun and Cheng, 2002; Li, 1998), and some scholars and teachers continue to look for solutions.

Task-based Language Teaching. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a communicative approach to language teaching, using the successful completion of communicative "tasks" as its primary organizing principle. Teaching is organized in a way that students will improve their language ability by concentrating on getting something done while using the language, rather than on explicitly practicing language forms, as in more traditional methods of teaching. According to Beale (2002), TBLT is closer to communicative principles than CLT itself. Although a number of scholars (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Sun and Cheng, 2002) considered the TBLT approach as an alternative to methods, this approach also has its own difficulties when it comes to implementation. As Littlewood (2007; 2004) argued, the initial challenges of TBLT are that teachers do not perceive what a task-based approach really means; and that the learner involvement is a major problem for teachers while implementing TBLT. Teachers and their implementation of language teaching methods and approaches are discussed next.

Teachers and the Implementation of Methods and Approaches

Research (Littlewood, 2004; Beckett, 2002; Brumfit, 1896) shows that many language teachers have difficulties with the methods and approaches designed by outsiders. Sun and Cheng (2002) examined the context and curriculum of one institution in China where CLT was implemented. In their case study, they proposed "a modification of the CLT method in an EFL context and promote task-based teaching" (p.83). Yu (2001) addressed the resistance to and the constraints that Chinese teachers have when implementing CLT. According to him, "a number of educators, researchers, and practitioners in the Chinese foreign language teaching community are skeptical as to whether CLT is really superior to the traditional analytical approach" (p.197). In the same line, South Korean secondary school English teachers in Li's (1998) study referred to six major constraints that stopped them from implementing CLT: "(a) deficiency in spoken English, (b) deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence in English, (c) lack of training in CLT, (d) few opportunities for retraining in CLT, (e) misconceptions about CLT, and (f) little time and expertise for developing communicative materials" (p.686). Brumfit (1986) explained the prospects and problems of CLT in relation to teaching second languages and asked whether or not language teaching has to be communicative. Brumfit came to the conclusion that while there is a set of common assumptions about the concept of a genuine communicative approach, there is no one particular communicative method.

CLT has been under critical scrutiny for many years (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Sun and Cheng, 2002; Li, 1998), and some scholars and teachers continue to look for solutions. According to Beale (2002), TBLT is closer to communicative principles than CLT itself. Although a number of scholars (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Sun and Cheng, 2002) considered the TBLT approach as an alternative to methods, this approach also

has its own difficulties when it comes to implementation. As Littlewood (2007; 2004) argued, the initial challenges of TBLT are that teachers do not perceive what a task-based approach really means; and that the learner involvement is a major problem for teachers while implementing TBLT. Zheng and Adamson's (2003) study of a secondary teacher in China indicated that teachers adjust their classroom practice by expanding their repertoire of teaching strategies. In fact, they do not totally reject or fully implement TBLT. They integrate the communicative elements in CLT or TBLT into their teaching with traditional elements of a structural approach rather than making radical changes. Jeon and Hahn (2006) examined EFL teachers' understandings of TBLT and why they select or avoid TBLT. The results indicated that the main reasons were teachers' limited knowledge of TBLT and a lack of target language proficiency. As literature (Carless, 2007; Ellis, 2003) shows, there is a crucial need for close examination of the suitability of task-based approaches for schooling, especially in contexts where TBLT may prove to oppose traditional educational norms.

As the review indicates, many scholars seem to abandon the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM). However, in Yang's (1999) study, knowledge of grammar provides the base for language development, "like building a house, you first have to construct a foundation so that your house is firm and strong" (p.35). Furthermore, a study carried out by Li (1998) revealed that CLT did not lead to successful English learning in some Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, China, and even Iran, where English is taught as a foreign language and in a large class. However, the Grammar Translation Method also has its own drawbacks; among them are students' lack of listening and speaking competence. Concluding this section, all the above-mentioned studies try to indicate the problematic aspects of various methods

(e.g., GTM) and approaches (e.g., CLT; TBLT) in language teaching and seem to verify the fact that there is no best method (Prabhu, 1990).

The Postmethod Condition

Since the end of the 1980s, language teaching pedagogy has come to the "point of maturity" (Brown, 2001, p.39), and a "state of heightened awareness" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 32) that it is time to set itself free from the intricacy of the endless search for the best alternative out of the profusion of methods (Baroudy & Mohseni-Far, 2008). Kumaravadivelu (1994) recognized what he calls the "postmethod condition", as a result of "the widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of method" (p.43). He described the postmethod condition as a search for an alternative to method, not an alternative method, where the teacher is autonomous and works according to principled pragmatism. It is based on the pragmatics of pedagogy where the theory can be realized during the teaching activity. Kumaravadivelu alluded to a sense of plausibility in order to explain how to follow principled pragmatism and asserted that sense of plausibility of teachers was not connected to the concept of method. Since then, Kumaravadivelu (2001) has continued to theorize this alternative to method in the form of a "postmethod pedagogy" comprising of three parameters, namely "particularity, practicality, and possibility" (p.538).

Particularity which is the first parameter refers to the belief that any language teaching program "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.538). The practicality parameter tries to "overcome some of the deficiencies inherent in the theory-versus-practice, theorists'-theory-versus-teachers'-theory

dichotomies by encouraging and enabling teachers themselves to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize" (p.541). The third parameter is possibility. According to Kumaravadivelu, "pedagogy, any pedagogy, is implicated in relations of power and dominance, and is implemented to create and sustain social inequalities" (p.542). He believed that teachers should be empowered to assist learners to critically reflect on the social and historical conditions that have shaped their cultural lives. As Kumaravadivelu (2003a) maintained, this postmethod paradigm is influenced by sociocultural theory, postcolonial theory, and critical pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu (1994) suggested ten macrostrategies for postmethod pedagogy and asserted that these macrostrategies are method neutral, meaning that the strategic framework comprising of macrostrategies and microstrategies is "not conditioned by a single set of theoretical principles or classroom procedures associated with any one particular language teaching method" (p.32). He defined macrostrategies as "a general plan, a broad guideline, based on which teachers will be able to generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies or classroom techniques" (p.545). In this paradigm, classroom techniques are described as "microstrategies." As Zhao (2007) argued, the ten macrostrategies suggested by Kumaravadivelu certainly bear a strong similarity to the "approach" defined by Richards and Rodgers (2001) as "a set of beliefs and principles that can be used as the basis for teaching a language" (p.245) and by Brown (2002) as "the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom" (p.12), while the macrostrategic framework of postmethod pedagogy seems to be an approach although it has a different name. Beale (2002) praised Kumaravadivelu's postmethod condition; however, he referred to it as an "eclectic mixing of teaching methods" (p.7). Likewise, Arikan (2006) compared this to the "postmethod condition" as "the qualities of the contemporary era in English language teaching in which previously well trusted methods are put under serious scrutiny and in which a body of

methods and techniques collected from all previous methods and approaches are used pragmatically with a belief that such an eclectic practice leads to success" (p.1). However, according to Kumaravadivelu's original theory, the "postmethod condition" paradigm is not eclecticism, since in his perspective, eclecticism is still under the constraint of the conventional concept of method, while his "principled pragmatism" focused on "how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal" (1994, p.31). Although some scholars, such as Arikan (2006) and Beale (2002) might have misconceptions of the original "postmethod condition" paradigm and may have understood methods more like Brown (2001), as Zhao (2007) maintained, current literature in second and foreign language education reveals that "postmethod pedagogy" has become popular.

Rethinking of Methods and the Postmethod Condition

Several scholars (Liu, 1995; Larsen-Freeman, 1999, 2005; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Bell, 2003) have responded to the postmethod condition and the postmethod pedagogy with a critical view. For instance, Liu (1995) believed that the problems that teachers have are not with the methods but with utilizing the methods in the wrong place at the wrong time. According to Liu (1995), Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies framework is not an alternative to method but an addition to method or a framework including method. Larsen-Freeman (1999) maintained that one of the reasons that methods have been criticized is that they are wrongly supposed to be fully intact formulaic packages for teaching practice. However, she argued that a method is a coherent set of links between teachers' beliefs and teaching actions, meaning that methods assist teachers inquire into their understanding of teaching, gain clarity about their beliefs, and constitute a basis from which they can make decisions about their teaching actions (Larsen-Freeman, 1999). She argued that,

> Methods serve as a foil for reflection that can aid teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies their action. ... When teachers are exposed to methods and asked to reflect on their principles and actively engage with their techniques, they can become clearer about why they do what they do (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.ix).

Richards and Rogers (2001) noted that experiencing various methods and approaches can assist the teachers with a preliminary practical knowledge base in teaching and can be utilized to develop teachers' own principles and practices. They illustrated that in the initial stages, teaching is a matter of implementing techniques and procedures developed by others. However, as teachers become more knowledgeable and experienced, they start developing their own approach to or method of teaching. Even at that stage, teachers are not forced to give up the method or approach that they began implementing. Instead, teachers will add, modify, and adjust the method or approach to fit their own teaching practice. Larsen-Freeman proposed an appropriateness of language teaching methods (1999) and called for a critical analysis of postmethod (2005). She proposed that "teachers and teacher educators should not be blinded by the criticisms of methods and thus fail to see their invaluable contribution to teacher education and continuing development" (Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.3). As Zhao (2007) asserted, because of the popularity and influence of the concept of the postmethod condition, the term method is now not often used. Other terms, such as approaches, strategies, skills, and techniques are currently more popular with scholars and educators as they theorize language teaching and learning. As Zhao argued, current literature reveals that scholars and teacher educators are very meticulous when they discuss about the issues related to teaching methods. In fact, in their discussions, they either carefully avoid the term "method" and/or subsume the term under the topic of teacher knowledge. Another preferred term is "pedagogical knowledge," which can include teaching methods and approaches (Zhao, 2007, p.34). A question that comes to mind is that in this postmethod condition, should a methods course still be a part of preservice teacher

education curriculum, or should it be replaced with a course on techniques and principles or micro and macro strategies. Issues related to preservice EFL teacher education will be discussed next.

Preservice EFL Teacher Education

Models of Language Teacher Education

Language teacher education before the 1990's has been criticized for being segmented. "Too often, its efforts focus on ancillary areas such as applied linguistics, methodology, or language acquisition while overlooking the core - teaching itself. Emphasis on these areas, although may create a pedagogical foundation for the teacher-in-preparation, skirts the central issue of learning to teach" (Freeman, 1989, p.27). According to Freeman, it is not accurate to think that knowledge in methodology, applied linguistics, and language acquisition alone "will necessarily enable or equip people to teach" (p.29). He identified two misconceptions that have often threatened the success of language teacher education.

> The first misconception is that language teacher education is generally concerned with the transmission of knowledge, specifically about applied linguistics and language acquisition, and of skills in methodology and related areas. The second misconception, which follows closely from the first, is that transmission of knowledge will lead to effective practice. Practicums and internships are often seen as the panaceas that will provide the missing link between knowledge and implementation. Once they know about it, the argument goes, teachers will figure out how to act on what they know (see Richards & Crookes, 1988) (Freeman, 1989, p.29).

Freeman (1989) supported refocusing language teacher education on teaching itself as opposed to methodology, applied linguistics or second language acquisition through two schemata: "a descriptive model that defines teaching as a decision-making

process based on the categories of knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness and (b) a related framework of two educating strategies - training and development - to teach teaching" (p.27). In Freeman's descriptive model, knowledge, for the teacher, "includes what is being taught (the subject matter); to whom it is being taught (the students–their backgrounds, learning styles, language levels, and so on); and where it is being taught (the sociocultural, institutional, and situational contexts)". Skills are "what the teacher has to be able to do: present material, give clear instructions, correct errors in various ways, manage classroom interaction and discipline, and so on" (p.31). These constituents, i.e. knowledge and skills form what is often known as the knowledge base of teaching. According to Freeman, teachers' use of knowledge and skills can be influenced by two other factors: attitude and awareness. The constituent of attitude which is defined as the stance one takes towards oneself, teaching activity, and the learners accounts for "the differential successes, strengths, and weaknesses of individual teachers" (p.32). In Freeman's descriptive model awareness which serves as the "unifying superordinate constituent" accounts for "the appropriate mobilization, interaction, and integration" of knowledge, skills and attitude constituents as one teaches (p.33). In other words, teachers' awareness comprises of "how much knowledge they possess, how well skilled they are, or how productive their attitudes are. Thus, access to each of these constituents is through teachers' awareness." Awareness as a constituent which "integrates and unifies the previous three constituents - knowledge, skills, and attitude-" can explain "why teachers grow and change" in the process of learning to teach (p.34) (see Figure 2.1).

AWARENESS triggers and monitors attention to:

ATITUDE
a stance toward
self, activity, and others that
links intrapersonal dynamics with
external performance and behaviors

SKILLS
the how of teaching:
method
technique
activity
materials/tools

KNOWLEDGE
the what of teaching:
 subject matter
knowledge of students
sociocultural/
 institutional context

Knowledge-Transmission
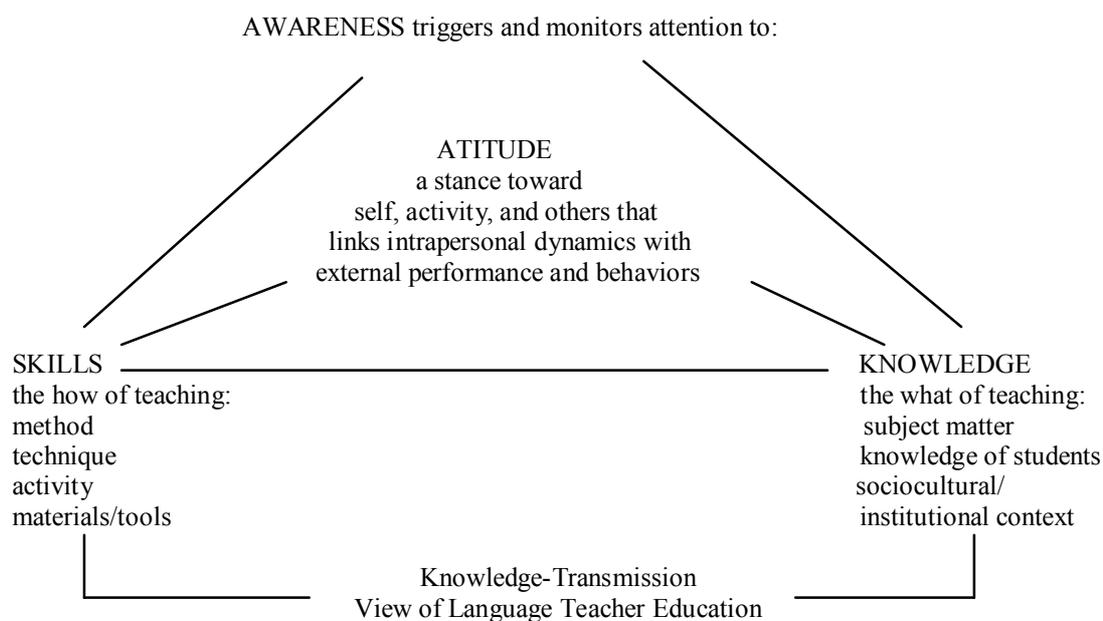View of Language Teacher Education

Figure 2.1. Descriptive Model of Teaching: The Constituents. Adopted from "Teacher training, development and decision making: A model teaching and related strategies for language teacher education," by D. Freeman, 1989, *TESOL Quarterly, 23*(1), p.36.

Freeman's (1989) second scheme is a related framework of two strategies, i.e. training and development to educate preservice teachers (see Table 2.1). According to him,

Training is a strategy for direct intervention by the collaborator, to work on specific aspects of the teacher's teaching. The intervention is focused on specific outcomes that can be achieved through a clear sequence of steps, commonly within a specified period of time. The aspects of teaching that are seen as "trainable" are discrete chunks, usually based on knowledge or skills, which can be isolated, practiced, and ultimately mastered (Freeman, 1989, p.39).

As Freeman (1989) maintained, training is based on a premise that "through mastery of discrete aspects of skills and knowledge, teachers will improve their effectiveness in the classroom". Moreover, "training assumes that this mastery of discrete aspects can and does aggregate into a whole form of teaching competence" (p.39). Freeman considered development as a "strategy of influence and indirect

intervention that works on complex, integrated aspects of teaching; these aspects are

idiosyncratic and individual." Development creates change "through increasing or

shifting awareness" of the teachers (p.40). According to him,

> Development is a far less predictable or directed strategy than
> training. It is highly dependent on the individual teacher, the
> collaborator, and their interaction. Because the collaborator's role is to
> trigger change through the teacher's awareness, rather than to
> intervene directly as in training, the changes that result from
> development cannot be foreseen or expected within a designated time
> period. They are essentially internal, although they can have external
> manifestations through changes in performance or behavior. However,
> to attempt to quantify them, as one would changes resulting from
> training, can lead to the misleading assumption that if no change is
> evident in practice, then none has occurred internally (Freeman, 1989,
> p.41).

Figure 2.2 displays the major differences between teacher training and teacher

development in Freeman's (1989) perspective.

	Teacher training: **Process of direct intervention**	**Teacher development:** **Process of influence**
Characteristics of aspects of teaching focused on	Generally accessible; can be mastered through specific courses of action	Idiosyncratic and individual; mature through constant attention, critique, and involvement of the teacher in his or her teaching
Constituent base	Knowledge and skills	Attitude and awareness
Focus	Initiated by collaborator, work carried out by teacher	Raised by collaborator, but work initiated by teacher
Criteria for assessing change	External; accessible to the collaborator	Internal; personal to teacher
Closure	Can be within a fixed time period, once criteria are satisfied	Is open-ended; work continues until teacher decides to stop

Figure 2.2. Educating Strategies. Adapted from "Teacher training, development and decision making: A model teaching and related strategies for language teacher education," by D. Freeman, 1989, *TESOL Quarterly, 23*(1), p.42.

According to Freeman (1989), "how we define language teaching will influence, to a large extent, how we educate people as language teachers" (p.28). If one believes that language teaching is a set of methods that one can use, he/she will provide preservice teachers with a set of methods, and will expect preservice teachers to be able to teach using these methods. If one believes that language teaching is a process that involves the context, the learners' and instructors' attitudes toward learning, skills, and their attention, one will try to highlight such elements while educating preservice teachers.

Woodward (1986) proposed the loop input model. Loop input highlights the utilization of both the content of a course and the process by which the content is delivered. According to Woodward (1991), "the content is carried by the process, but the process is also part of the content" and that is the loop (p.13). The advantages of loop input as Woodward (2003) argued are that "it is multi-sensory, in just the same way as experiential learning, but with the added advantage of involving self-descriptivity and recursion, both of which can have the effect of fascinating certain people" (p.303). As Bandura (1986) believed, by using loop input in teacher education programs, teacher educators can minimize the gap that sometimes exists between practices that are suggested and the teacher educators' or trainers' own approach. By contextualizing the method or strategy, student teachers will be better able to build a sense of efficacy through indirect experience. According to DelliCarpini (2009), "watching someone who is successful at a particular task in an authentic situation tends to increase the observers' sense of their ability to also successfully complete a task" (p.42).

Considering teaching as a profession, and teachers as professional people, Wallace (1991) identified three different models of language teacher education: 1) The craft or apprenticeship model in which trainee teachers' professional competence is developed through study with an experienced practitioner by imitating the expert's demonstration and by following the expert's instruction. By this process, expertise in the craft is passed on from generation to generation (see Figure 2.3).
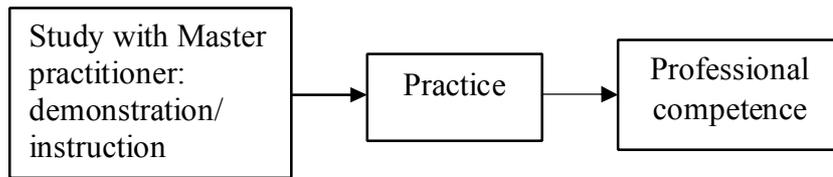
Figure 2.3. The Craft Model of Professional Education. Adopted from *"Training foreign language teachers"* by M. J. Wallace, 1991, p.6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2) The applied science or theory-to-practice model is one in which trainee teachers receive findings of scientific knowledge from experts in the related area, and then apply them in real-world contexts. A crude schematization of the applied science model of professional education is reflected in Figure 2.4. It will be seen that, in its extreme form, this model is essentially one-way. The results of scientific knowledge and experimentation are delivered to the trainee by those who are professionals in the relevant fields.
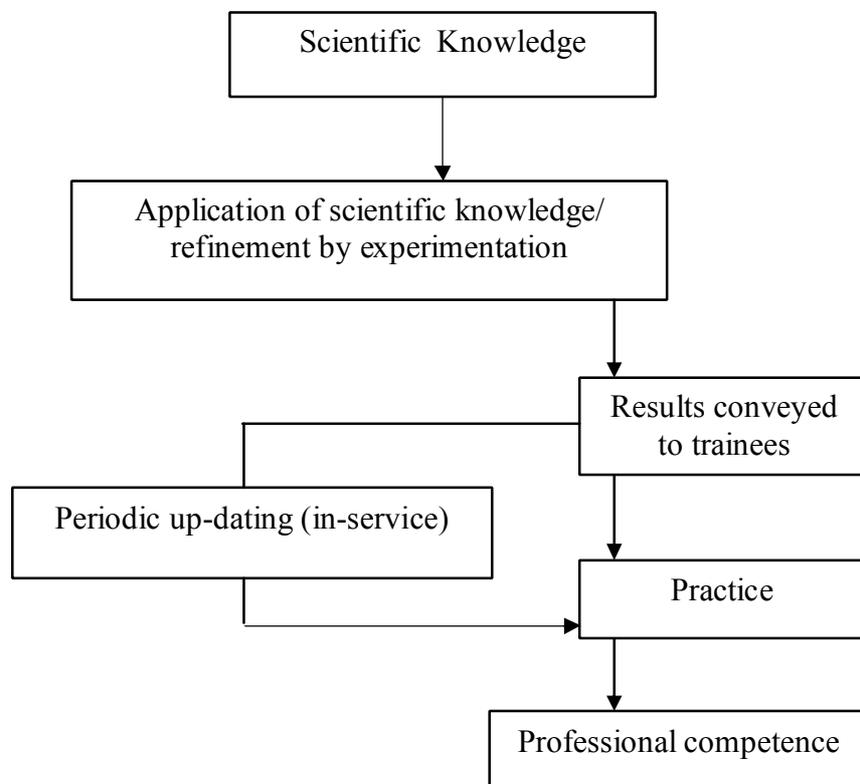

Figure 2.4. The Applied Science Model. Adopted from *"Training foreign language teachers"* by M. J. Wallace, 1991, p.9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3) The reflective model, which allows preservice or practicing teachers to achieve their professional competence through a continued cycle of practice and reflection relating to their pre-training knowledge and the knowledge they gain during the course of the study. The basic elements of this model may be summarized as in Figure 2.5.
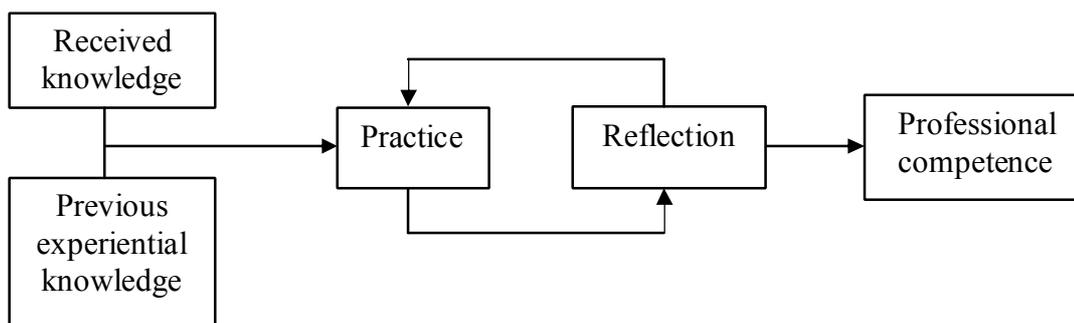
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┌──────────────┐
│   Received   │
│  knowledge   │──────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
└──────────────┘      │          │     ┌──────────┐         │
                      ├────────► │ Practice │  │Reflection│──► Professional
┌──────────────┐      │          │     └──────────┘    │      competence
│   Previous   │      │          └──────────────────────┘
│ experiential │──────┘
│  knowledge   │
└──────────────┘
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Figure 2.5. The Reflection Model. Adopted from *"Training foreign language teachers"* by M. J. Wallace, 1991, p.15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

As Crandall (2000) noted, Wallace's (1991) three models are very similar to Freeman's three views of teaching (1991; 1996):

> 1) teaching as doing, a behavioral model emphasizing what teachers do and encouraging a skill or craft model of teacher education; 2) teaching as thinking and doing, a cognitive model emphasizing what teachers know and how they do it, encouraging both theory and skills development and craft and applied science models of teacher education; and 3) teaching as knowing what to do, an interpretivist view emphasizing why teachers do what they do in different contexts, encouraging the addition of reflection and the development of frameworks of interpretation to theory and skill development in teacher education (p.37).

Similar to Wallace (1991), Freeman and Richards (1993) used a framework proposed by Zahorik to analyze conceptions of second language teaching and discuss how these conceptions shape specific forms of language teacher education. According to Zahorik (1986), conceptions of teaching in general can be classified as (1)

science/research; (2) theory/philosophy; and (3) art/craft conceptions. As Freeman and Richards (1993) explained, scientifically based conceptions of second language teaching assume that teaching is shaped by research and "supported by experimentation and empirical investigation" (p.195). On the other hand, theory- and value-based conceptions view teaching as promoting particular values and suggest that "justifications for teaching can be arrived at through reason or rational thought" (p.201). The third category of conceptions, referred to as art/craft conceptions of teaching, is to view second language teaching as an art or craft, "which depends upon the individual teacher's skill and personality" (p.202). Taking these three conceptions of teaching as a starting point, Freeman and Richards (1993) discussed three different approaches to second language teacher education: (1) the non-compatibility position, i.e. "each conception of teaching implies an independent and non-compatible approach to teacher education"; (2) the eclecticist position, which holds that "conceptions of teaching are equally valid and to be regarded as alternatives" in teacher education; (3) the developmental position, which views "the three conceptions of teaching as standing in progression" and in the evolution of teacher education (p.211). As Luo (2003) argued, although Wallace (1991) and Freeman and Richards (1993) have explored the possible models or forms of second/foreign language teacher education employing different taxonomy or classification, by and large, three various approaches to the design of language teacher programs, i.e., craft, applied science, and reflection, can be identified.

Widdowson (1997) distinguished between teacher training and teacher education by characterizing the former as solution-oriented, whereas the later as problem-oriented. By his definition, in language teacher training, teachers are given "specific instruction in practical techniques to cope with predictable events", while in language teacher education, "a broader intellectual awareness of theoretical principles underlying particular practices" is given (p.121). In both programs, the novice or experienced

teacher is considered as a passive receiver of transmitted knowledge; there is no understanding of the role that language teachers play in their own development, which teacher research has started to identify as being of significant importance (Edge & Richards 1993, Woodward 1991 (cited in Crandall, 2000). However, Widdowson (1997), dismissed both kinds of provision, and proposed a self generated scheme for second/foreign language teacher education emphasizing the ability of teachers to explore the process of language teaching through a less transmissive and more collaborative approach. In Widdowson's self generated education model, "second/foreign language teachers are recognized as initiators of ideas rather than passive receivers of knowledge" (Widdowson, 1997, p.126).

Day (1993) proposed four models for second language teacher education: (a) the apprentice-expert model, (b) the rationalist model, (c) the case studies model, and (d) the integrative model. Day asserted that the knowledge base of these teacher education models comprises of four categories of knowledge: content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and support knowledge. Here, language teaching methods are also included in the knowledge base.

Emphasizing that teacher knowledge plays an important role in teacher education, Kumaravadivela (2005) suggested a modular model for language teacher education. According to him,

> The model consists of five modules: knowing, analyzing, reviewing, doing and seeing. Knowing involves acquiring: (a) personal knowledge, (b) professional knowledge, and (c) practical knowledge. Analyzing involves examining learner: (a) needs, (b) wants, and (c) situations. Reviewing involves using: (a) self, (b) peer, and (c) educator assessments for teacher preparation. Doing involves performing: (a) micro-teaching, (b) team-teaching, and (c) self-teaching. Seeing involves comprehending mismatches between: (a) learner, (b) teacher, and (c) researcher perspectives of teaching acts. The proposed model takes a modular view of teacher education with

multiple entry points and multiple exit points. Each module, while autonomous, is part of a larger context, each shaping and being shaped by the others (Kumaravadivela, 2005, p.1).

In this model, Kumaravadivelu (2005) considered professional knowledge as a part of the module of "knowing". Classroom techniques are included in his macrostrategic framework (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b). As he noted, the purpose of this modular model is:

> To help teachers understand (a) how to build a viable professional, personal and procedural knowledge-base, (b) how to explore learning and teaching needs, wants and lacks, (c) how to recognize their own attitudes, believes and values, (d) how to do teaching, theorizing and dialogizing, and (e) how to monitor their own teaching acts. Teachers can develop a holistic understanding of what happens in their classroom, and be able to theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize. The model seeks to assist teachers and teacher educators to meet educational challenges in a global society (Kumaravadivela, 2008, p.1).

No doubt there is no single ideal model for language teacher education programs, since the context in which the programs are implemented is complex, dynamic and socially situated (Luo, 2003). According to Luo, in spite of the various forms of teacher development, previous studies have suggested that EFL/ESL teacher education programs should provide teacher learners with a basis of knowledge or principles whereby they are able to carry out their teaching activities or decision making in real teaching settings and with opportunities to reflect on their decisions accordingly. In the following section, issues related to the teacher knowledge base in EFL teacher education will be discussed.

Teacher's Knowledge Base in EFL Teacher Education

In the past decades, scholarly attention was given to the concept of teacher knowledge and various reforms attempted to reevaluate the structure and practices of teacher education (Sandlin et. al, 1992) and to improve the teacher preparation process (Verloop et. al, 2001; Woods, 1996; Valli and Tom, 1988; Shulman, 1987). According to Valli and Tom (1988), the term knowledge base refers to "the entire repertoire of skills, information, attitudes, etc. that teachers need to carry out their classroom responsibility" (p.5). Research on knowledge base for teacher education in the field of general education (Hegarty, 2000; Shulman, 1987) and ESL/EFL education (Fradd & Lee, 1998; Freeman & Johnson, 1998) has been carried out both empirically and conceptually in the past.

In the exploration of the knowledge base for teaching in general education, Shulman (1987, p.8) proposed the most influential theoretical framework comprising of a set of different categories ranging from content knowledge, knowledge of educational contexts (at both micro- and macro-levels), curriculum knowledge (the programs designed for teaching certain subjects and topics and various instructional materials in relation to those programs), knowledge of educational objectives and values, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, to familiarity with new technology, knowledge of statistics, research methods, and insights into cultural influences on learning. Within content knowledge in Shulman's (1987) taxonomy, subject matter knowledge is defined as "the knowledge, understanding, skill, and disposition that are to be learned by school children" (pp.8-9). Pedagogical content knowledge comprises of ideas, explanations, illustrations, demonstrations and analogies, which are the means of formulating and representing the subject to make it understandable to students. It also involves the pedagogical reasoning skill, the ability to alter subject matter of instruction into "forms

that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students" (p.15).

According to Shulman (1987), although the mentioned variables are important and necessary components of the teacher's learning process, they should not be viewed as the core knowledge base of education. In fact, as Shulman asserted, "a knowledge base for teaching is not fixed and final. It will, however, become abundantly clear that much, if not most of the proposed knowledge base remains to be discovered, invented, and redefined" (p.12). Shulman also mentioned the sources for the teaching knowledge base, namely 1) the accumulated knowledge in content areas; 2) educational aids and structures, for instance, curriculum, textbooks, school organization and the teaching profession structure; 3) research on the processes of schooling, teaching and learning; and 4) the wisdom of practice, referring to the maxims that guide the practices of efficient teachers. These four major sources proposed by Shulman (1987) may serve the knowledge base of teaching quite well; however, it may be argued that one of the important components which is the ability of reflecting on teaching by novice teachers is not considered in the corroboration of the knowledge base (Luo, 2003). Shulman (1987) maintained that the teaching process is a series of pedagogical reasoning and action including "a cycle through the activities of comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, and reflection" (p.14). As Luo (2003) pointed out, although Shulman emphasized the knowledge of the structures of subject matter and enthusiasm for what is to be taught and learned, he seemed to have left out the ability of reconstructing and reflecting that teachers need to develop when they want to deliver effective teaching.

Succeeding Shulman's (1987) work, several researchers (Schelfhout et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Grossman, Schoenfeld, and Lee, 2005; Grosso

de Leon, 2001; Borko & Putnam, 1995; Grossman, 1990) had contributed to the knowledge base of teacher education in a more integrated way. Schelfhout et al. (2006) believed that the most important learning objective for teacher education programs is to become a good teacher. To achieve that aim, they maintained that teacher education programs should help student teachers to:

> a) master the content knowledge of the discipline they wish to teach; b) have skills and knowledge about learning and teaching at their disposal in order to teach properly; c) work within school organizations; d) notice any shortcomings of their own educational approaches and must continuously improve their teaching, and e) take on a broader pedagogical and moral responsibility (Schelfhout et al., 2006, pp.875-876).

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) believed that to be efficient, today's teachers require a wide repertoire of knowledge and skills, comprising of deep content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of how children and adolescents learn in different contexts, skills for forming a classroom community that assists in learning for different students, knowledge about various ways of assessment, and the capability to reflect on practice. Grossman et al. (2005) echoed the work of Shulman (1987) and other scholars whose studies developed conceptualizations of teachers' knowledge base beyond subject matter competence to comprise knowledge of pedagogy, educational context, content, and learners besides the main subject of study. According to Grossman et al. (2005), subject matter knowledge is no longer considered as adequate teaching knowledge; efficient representation of that subject matter to students is identified to be of equal importance. Grossman (1990) identified four general categories for teacher knowledge base: a) subject matter knowledge; b) general pedagogic knowledge; c) pedagogic content knowledge; and d) knowledge of context.

As Johnson (2006) asserted language teacher education has shifted the research focus to an understanding of "teacher cognition," which is to understand "who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts through their careers" (p.236). The changes and innovations in the field of second and foreign language teaching appear to have been greatly influenced by government policies as well as outsiders who are greatly criticized for not knowing the classroom context as well as the teachers (Zhao, 2007). Research (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Sun and Cheng, 2002) reveals that a large number of teachers have difficulties when they want to implement methods or approaches created by others. This brought the researcher to the question of what teachers know about language teaching methods and how teachers adapt various methods and approaches. Moreover, it leads to the discussion of teachers' knowledge base. The researcher reviews the literature on teacher knowledge base in EFL teacher education over the next few pages.

As Howatt and Widdowson (2004) maintained, discussions about what language teachers should know are almost as old as institutionalized language teaching itself. Around the mid-1990s, serious attention was given to the question of what the knowledge base of language teaching might be. Many researchers and educators (Gatbonton, 2000; Day & Conklin, 1992; Richards, 1991; Freeman, 1989) have studied about second and foreign language teacher knowledge and teacher education. Since the early years of theorizing about language teaching (Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957), there had been an undisputed presumption that what language teachers required was declarative knowledge about the language which they were teaching. Under this supposition, what teachers knew was the structure of the language they taught, as well as some largely mechanistic pedagogy for transferring that knowledge to students (Johnston & Irujo, 2001). A rethinking of this perspective of teacher knowledge did not truly start until some scholars (e.g., Woods, 1996; Johnson, 1992) initiated studies based on empirical

data from the real language teaching. Probably the first major formulation of teacher knowledge appeared in Woods' (1996) construct of BAK (beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge). According to Woods, BAK refers to "a set of interrelated propositions ... and the relationships among them, similar to schemata but integrating the more value-laden elements of beliefs and assumptions" (p.196).

Freeman (1989) identified language teaching as a process of decision-making that needs various strategies depending on the constituents of knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness. According to his descriptive model of teaching, teacher knowledge is "the *what* of teaching," which comprises of subject matter, knowledge of students, sociocultural or institutional context; skills are "the *how* of teaching," which involves methods, techniques, activity materials or tools; attitude is a stance toward self, activity, and others that relates intrapersonal dynamics with external performance and behaviours; and awareness includes the triggers and monitors (Freeman, 1989, p. 36).

Day and Conkin (1992) identified four types of knowledge base for language teacher education: a) content knowledge which refers to the knowledge of the subject matter (what ESL/EFL teachers teach); b) pedagogic knowledge which refers to the knowledge of generic teaching strategies, beliefs and practices, regardless of the focus of the subject matter (how we teach); c) pedagogic content knowledge which refers to the specialized knowledge of how to represent content knowledge in diverse ways that students can understand; the knowledge of how students come to understand the subject matter, what difficulties they are likely to encounter when learning it, what misconceptions interfere with learning, and how to overcome these problems (how we teach ESL/EFL in general; or how we teach ESL/EFL reading or writing in particular, for example); and d) support knowledge which refers to the knowledge of the various disciplines that support the approach to teaching and learning of English (cited in Day,

1993, pp.3-4). Freeman (1989) and Day and Conkin (1992) included teaching methods in their description of teachers' knowledge.

According to Richards (1991), pedagogical content knowledge which is "the core set of theories, concepts and practices regarding second language learning and teaching" forms the content of language teacher education (p.1). He noted that pedagogical content knowledge in language teacher education programs comprises of two main areas: "subject matter knowledge (language theory, English grammar, phonology, second language learning, etc.) and teaching skills (methodology, classroom management, presentation and practice techniques, etc.)" (p.9).

Gatbonton (2000) identified pedagogical knowledge as the teacher's accumulated knowledge about teaching goals, procedures, and strategies. Gatbonton argued that pedagogical knowledge is the basis for teachers' classroom behaviors and practices. In her study, she considered various types of knowledge, namely knowledge of language management, knowledge of learners, knowledge of teaching goals and subject matter, and knowledge about teaching techniques and procedures, as pedagogical knowledge.

Freeman (1989) maintained that traditionally language teacher education has been based on the misconception that a transmission of knowledge about applied linguistics and language acquisition is adequate for a preservice teacher to become an efficient classroom instructor. However, Freeman and Johnson (1998) argued that,

> … teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills. They are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do. (p.401)

Freeman and Richards (1993) investigated various conceptions of teaching skills. They asserted that decisions made by teachers about how they teach are based on the teachers' beliefs, principles, and values, not on criteria developed within a scientific paradigm, or through process/product forms of research. They maintained that "a good teacher is seen as one who analyzes a classroom situation, realizes that a range of options is available based on the particular circumstances, and then selects the alternative which is likely to be most effective in that instance" (p.206).

According to some researchers such as Richards and Freeman (1993), it is highly probable that teachers teach in the way that they were taught. They argued that "the foundations of an individual's ideas about teaching are well established through the experience of being a student" (p.210). This process is what Lortie (1975) called 'apprenticeship of observation'. As Borg (2004) argued, one of the results of this apprenticeship time is that, "whereas people entering other professions are more likely to be aware of the limitations of their knowledge, student teachers may fail to realize that the aspects of teaching which they received as students represented only a partial view of the teachers' job" (p.274). According to Lortie (1975), students see "the teacher frontstage and center like an audience viewing a play. However, … they do not see the backstage behaviors which are a crucial part of a teacher's job" (p.62). As Lortie argued, since these teaching behaviors and practices are greatly unanalyzed, they stay 'intuitive and imitative'. Buchmann (1987) called these practices as "folkways of teaching" which refer to "ready-made recipes for action and interpretation that do not require testing or analysis while promising familiar, safe results" (p.161).

The study carried out by Golombek (1998) also proposed that the personal practical knowledge of teachers, which was affected by their experiences as language learners in the classroom, as individuals outside of the classroom, as participants in the teacher education program, and as teachers in the teaching profession, influences their teaching actions in the classrooms. She noted that various aspects of teachers' knowledge are interwoven and that teachers use their knowledge holistically (Golombek, 1998).

Freeman and Johnson (1998) identified a need to reconceptualize the knowledge base of language teacher education. According to them,

> the core of the new knowledge-base must focus on the activity of teaching itself; it should centre on the teacher who does it, the contexts in which it is done, and the pedagogy by which it is done. Moreover, this knowledge-base should include forms of knowledge representation that document teacher learning within the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it occurs. Finally … the knowledge-base of language teacher education needs to account for the teacher as a learner of teaching, the social context of schools and schooling within which teacher-learning and teaching occur, and the activities of both language teaching and language learning (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p.397).

Supported by the work of Shulman (1987) and Grossman (1990), Freeman and Johnson (1998, pp.407-411) proposed an "epistemological framework" for a new knowledge base in language teacher education integrating: (a) "the nature of the teacher-learner" that is the role of prior knowledge and beliefs in learning to teach (e.g., Lortie, 1975; Johnson, 1994; Bailey et al., 1996), "the ways in which such teaching knowledge develops over time and throughout teachers' careers" (e.g., Berliner, 1986; Genburg, 1992), the role of context in teacher's learning (e.g., Britzman, 1991), and "the role of teacher education as a form of intervention in these areas, particularly in changing teachers' beliefs about content and learners" (e.g., Freeman & Richards,

1996); (b) "the nature of schools" that is the physical and sociocultural settings in which teaching and learning actually take place and of "schooling" that is the sociocultural and historical processes, of which teaching is one important part, that take place in the school settings; and (c) the nature of language teaching and learning, including pedagogical thinking and activities, the subject matter (that is the professional or disciplinary perception of what is being taught), content (that is the teachers' and students' perception of what is being taught in a lesson or course), and tools (e.g., computers) used in language teaching and learning. As Freeman and Johnson argued, "teaching as an activity cannot be separated from either the person of the teacher as a learner or the contexts of schools and schooling in which it is done; each domain is contingent on the other two." In fact, Freeman and Johnson's framework focused on "the activity of teaching itself - who does it, where it is done, and how it is done" (p.405). According to them, for educating teachers, "any theory of SLA, any classroom methodology, or any description of that English language as content must be understood against the backdrop of teachers' professional lives, within the settings where they work, and within the circumstances of that work" (*Ibid*). As Johnston and Irujo (2001) asserted, "… much of the most recent empirical research has, either explicitly or implicitly, been addressed to Freeman and Johnson's call for a revised understanding and appreciation of the nature of teacher knowledge" (p.116).

Tsui (2003) looked at the professional development of four ESL teachers in a secondary school in Hong Kong. Tsui's (2003) study revealed that teachers' practices in the classroom reflect their personal practical knowledge, principles, beliefs systems, and values. Likewise, Johnston and Goettsch (2000) examined the knowledge base of experienced teachers, which comprises of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and the knowledge of learners. They asserted that the knowledge base of

language teaching is situated, process-oriented, and contextualized, meaning that the knowledge base is utilized in the classroom; that the knowledge is rooted in a mainly dialogical approach to teaching in which there is a continuous interaction between the teachers' knowledge and action and teachers' awareness of student's knowledge and student's learning; and that the knowledge base should be focal to any language teacher education program. Flowerdew (1998) investigated a program called the Language Learning Experience in Hong Kong, which provided student teachers with the opportunity to reflect on language learning as beginners, and on language teaching, including different teaching methods, from the language learners' perspectives. According to Flowerdew, such a program helps the teachers by requiring them to experience the difficulties that learners face while learning L2 and giving them insight into how to teach in a way that assists students the most.

Although the above-mentioned studies (Tsui, 2003; Johnston and Goettsch, 2000; Flowerdew, 1998) contributed to the teacher education field by examining what teachers know and what they need to know for their language teaching, as research (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b; Gatbonton, 2000; Freeman & Richards, 1993) reveals, there is no clear answer to the question of what teachers need to know for their language teaching or whether they need to learn language teaching methods since it is now widely believed that much depends on their circumstances. In fact, as Zhao (2007) asserted, what teachers need to learn in their preservice teacher education program is one thing and how and whether the teachers find it worthwhile to implement what they have learned into their teaching practice in the classroom is another thing. In the following section, the curricular components of the EFL teacher education are examined.

The Curricular Components of EFL Teacher Education

Cross (1995) proposed various components to be included in a teacher education curriculum. One of the components that Cross proposed is the pedagogic technique which teaches the teacher trainees on how to present lexical items, design and conduct meaningful drills, and introduce communicative structures. Materials development provides prospective teachers with opportunities to adapt and design instructional materials. The trainees also learn to produce activities related to the materials and prepare tests accordingly. Furthermore, Cross (1995) added that management skills of teachers are equally important and should be focused upon in teacher education programs. He argued that timing a lesson, maintaining attention, and using eye contact must be taught in language preparation courses. Cross, pointing out the importance of the combination of theory and practice, argued that theoretical knowledge helps teacher trainees to reflect and question classroom practices. Therefore, Cross maintained that prospective teachers should be taken to the actual teaching settings to discover the mechanics of language classrooms.

Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987) noted that the communicative approach to language teaching requires a new focus into foreign language teacher education. They claimed that the courses taught in teacher education programs should encourage interaction in the classroom instead of promoting teacher-dominant lecture types. They suggested that in order to help prospective teachers to "focus on the social nature of language and communication" (p.304), teacher preparation programs should incorporate sociolinguistics, sociology, and anthropology into their curriculum. Concerning the importance of sociolinguistic knowledge for language teachers, Ryan (1996) stated that foreign language teachers, while teaching the language and its linguistic features, are necessarily involved with sociolinguistic aspects of language.

Jorstad (1981), in pointing out the multi-disciplinary nature of language teaching, suggested that teacher education programs be organized by psychologists, educators, linguists and other related professionals.

Regarding the courses taught in teacher education programs, a number of educators emphasize the importance of knowledge of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories for language teachers (Lightbown, 1985; Bahns, 1990; Morain, 1993). Lightbown (1985), for example, argued that language acquisition research is an "essential component of teacher education, because it can give teachers appropriate expectations for themselves and their students" (p.183). Emphasizing the importance of SLA for language teachers, Bahns (1990) stated that knowledge of SLA research might cause a change in the attitudes of the teachers. At least teachers who are informed about the findings of SLA research, might judge students' errors as natural products of the language learning process.

Although educators emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to educating future language teachers, Bernhardt and Hammnadou (1987) reported that many teacher education programs are still based on teaching the structures of the language. In their article, Hammadou and Bernhardt reported on some findings of surveys on the contents of the TESOL and Bilingual Education. The findings of the surveys revealed that forty of the forty-four programs required an introduction to linguistics, thirty-two programs required grammar of English and only sixteen programs required psycholinguistics, while seven required a sociolinguistics course in their programs. Morain (1993) drew the profile of teacher education programs for the 21st century as follows:

1. Foreign language teachers will acquire far superior language skills during their college education.

2. Prospective teachers will gain deeper insights into the teaching/learning process during their professional preparation.

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3. Foreign language professionals in the schools will perceive themselves not only as teachers, but also as mentors and classroom researchers.

4. The foreign language profession as a whole will be less narcissistic; no longer content to gaze inward at its own perfection, it will look outward toward meaningful interaction with schools and society (p.101).

Morain, emphasizing the importance of pedagogical education, argued that in the 21st century, language departments will accept the important role they have in the preparation of future teachers. Morain (1993), naming syntax, phonetics, and conversation class as "Old Faithfuls", argued that these courses will be more than demonstrating and clarifying points in grammar and phonetics. These courses will help future teachers to design and implement effective ways to teach their students in the target language in the 21st century. Finally, according to Morain, the teacher education curriculum will be enriched with courses which help future teachers to "talk and write intelligently about their own culture and to compare it with the target culture" (p.102). In the following section, the theory and practice in EFL teacher education is discussed.

Theory and Practice in EFL Teacher Education

The training of teachers to teach English to speakers of other languages has been the focus of attention at least since the 1960s (Richards, 2008) and has attracted the attention of scholars worldwide (Richards and Nunan, 1990; Woodward, 1991; Wallace, 1991; Freeman & Freeman, 1994). Traditionally, teacher education has been "characterized by a strong emphasis on theory that is 'transferred' to teachers in the form of lectures" (Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell, 2006, p.1021). According to them,

The knowledge-transmission view of teacher education has been under consistent scrutiny for its many problems and limitations. This is primarily due to the fact that the knowledge base of university-based teacher education is incapable of filling the gap between the theory as it is treated in teacher education programs and the knowledge and skills of experienced teachers or their competency at schools (Korthagen et al., 2006, p.1021).

Nerenz (1993) commented on the teacher education programs and stressed that "teacher education programs should be more than a mere collection of courses" (p.168). There are several educators who claim that effective teacher training programs are the ones which are relevant to the present-day movements in education and social demand. These educators emphasize that college preparation should prepare teachers for real world teaching practices. If the program is far from providing this opportunity to prospective teachers then graduating students might not teach successfully (Denmark and Nelli, 1980; Blair, 1983; Cross, 1995). According to Blair (1983), most teacher training programs consist of the courses which are irrelevant, unrealistic, too theoretical, and impractical. Ur (1992) focused on the same point by stating that trainee teachers feel that there is hardly any connection between the courses offered in their program and their classroom practices.

The necessity of theories underlying classroom practices has been stressed by a number of researchers. According to Widdowson (1984),

Theory is an indispensable tool which is shaping the practices of teachers in the classroom. No matter how concerned teachers may be with the immediate practicalities of the classroom, their techniques are based on some principle or other which is accountable by theory (p.87).

On the other hand, Brumfit (1983) claimed that "specific teaching techniques are inseparably bound up with issues of educational principle" (p.129). Ur (1992)

believed that teacher preparation programs should include both "practical and theoretical input, experience, and reflection" (p.61). Similarly, Schrier (1994) held that "a foreign language education curriculum should combine the theory and the practice of language learning and teaching" (p.73). In a study of a preservice EFL teacher program in Malaysia, Gaudart (1994) maintained that teacher educators must attempt to make links between theory and practice rather than leave student teachers to make connections among the components (e.g., the education component and methods component) of the teacher program. Gaudart (1994) urged teacher educators to examine closely the curriculum they followed as well as their own teaching practices by asking questions such as:

> What and how does the study of syntax and phonology contribute to the education of the preservice teacher? What is there in psychology which can help the preservice student teacher organize group work for the practice of spoken skills? If a discipline or any part of a discipline is worth teaching, how do we make it relevant for the preservice language student teacher? (p.87)

In order to merge theory and practice in preservice EFL teacher education programs, Gaudart suggested that teacher educators should put the curriculum into practice by employing methodology used in language teaching and applying the techniques and methods to teaching preservice teachers, such as small group work, role play, case studies, problem-solving activities, etc. Gaudart also noted that, for theory and practice to merge, teacher educators must be aware of the difference between their teaching style and preservice teachers' learning style. Teacher educators need to give teacher learners opportunities for practice or experimentation without evaluation, to recognize and encourage self-initiated learning for both teacher educators and teacher learners, and to evaluate the process of learning to teach as well as the final product.

With respect to the practical and realistic aspects of teacher education programs, educators have proposed various activities which can promote realistic and practical training in teacher education programs. For instance, as Strevens (1974) mentioned, in teacher education programs prospective teachers might be asked to observe actual classroom sessions, microteaching through video-tape recordings, teaching to fellow trainees, or long-term teaching practice in a school setting under the supervision of an experienced teacher. Ellis (1986) divided teacher training practices into two groups: experiential and awareness-raising practices. Experiential practices require prospective teachers to teach actual students or in the classroom to peers. However, awareness-raising activities include the types of practices which intend to develop trainees' understanding of some underlying ELT principles. Ellis suggested that experiential and conscious-raising activities should be combined in teacher preparation programs. Ellis (1986) provided a list of data collection sources that teacher trainers might be engaged in. He argued that teacher trainers might design some tasks for prospective teachers based on the collected data. Teacher trainers might collect data in a number of ways: by video or audio recording of the actual lesson taught in schools, providing readings, and by providing ELT textbook materials or lesson plans. Once these sources are available, the students might be asked to compare two different lesson plans, or the students might be asked to evaluate the teachers approach to error correction in a video recording. In addition, Ellis (1986) suggested a number of different procedures to present the tasks to the prospective teachers. Teacher educators might provide opportunities to prospective teachers to engage in group/pair discussions, designing workshops, organizing plenary discussions in which general ELT issues are discussed with all the teacher trainees together, or panel discussions with a group of teacher trainees. van Lier (1992) proposed a way to resolve the theory-practice issue. As he maintained,

Instead of the usual linguistic sub-topics such as phonetics, syntax, discourse analysis and so on, I propose that we identify language-related themes from the teachers' own sphere of activity... Within each theme, it is inevitable that straightforward linguistic phenomena of phonology, syntax, discourse, etc will need to be explored at some point. This exploration will necessitate a certain amount of linguistic study in the traditional sense, but it is very important that such study is now motivated by a real-life question that requires an answer. Interestingly in this scheme of Language Awareness development, we treat 'the teaching of linguistics' in a similar way to the way in which we treat 'the teaching of grammar' in a task-based communicative approach. We do not teaching linguistics 'because it is there', but because it helps us to solve language problems in real-life tasks (van Lier, 1992, p.102).

Kumaravadivelu (1999) proposed what he referred to as critical classroom observation as a means for engaging teachers in the process of theorizing their own practice. This process comprises of self-observation of a lesson by the teacher together with observation by students in the lesson and an observer, following which their various viewpoints are compared and the meaning of the lesson is interpreted and theorized. Other educators also focus on relativity of the courses taught in teacher education programs to the real conditions in a classroom. Of these educators, Johnson (1996) stated that there should be a set of realistic expectation about the theoretical aspects taught in the courses. She claimed that teacher education programs should emphasize the perceptual knowledge as opposed to what is called the conceptual knowledge which is too abstract. Johnson (1996), drawing on the current views postulated by teacher educators, stated that programs should provide the novice teachers with opportunities "to explore, develop, and refine their perceptual knowledge; to uncover what they are actually aware of; to articulate the particulars of their own classroom context; to examine their own reactions, thoughts, and feelings; and to account for the intricacies of their own teaching" (p.766).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with the research design and discusses the site, participants, details of instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and data triangulation. The issue of trustworthiness of the data is also discussed at the end.

Research Design

To answer the research questions (see p.9) which were developed to guide the study, a qualitative case study design was adopted. The researcher chose the qualitative case study design to examine the conceptions and experiences of her cases, comprising eight high school English teachers (focal participants) and three EFL methods course lecturers, who were working in the Semnan Province, about the contribution of the EFL methods course in equipping the teachers with the knowledge and skills of different language teaching methods as well as the use or adaptation of these methods in real classes with "a more in-depth focus than obtaining a general picture of their opinions using quantitative inquiry" (Wallestad, 2009, p.84). Miles and Huberman (1994) elucidated that qualitative data is a "well-grounded, rich description and explanation of processes in identifiable local contexts" (p.9). According to Merriam (1998), qualitative approaches, such as a case study, have a shared purpose in "eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as a primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, and inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive" (p.11).

As Merriam (1998) maintained, case studies are "intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system" (p.19) and provide a rich and holistic account of a particular case as it is "anchored in real-life situations" (p.32). In other words, Merriam defined a case as a "thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p.27) and a case study as "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (p.41). Creswell (1998) and Merriam (1998) argued that, a case study design enables researchers to focus on a single case or multiple cases with a rich, in-depth description and explanation in a specific context. According to Yin (2003), case study research is most appropriate when the phenomena and variables cannot be separated from the context and thick description, experiential understanding and multiple realities are expected. In utilizing this type of qualitative method, i.e. case study, it is possible to see the complexity in the details (Borg, 2005).

Site

The data for this qualitative study was collected from April 2009 to July 2009 from Semnan, Shahroud, Damghan and Garmsar, the counties of Semnan Province, Iran covering an area of 96816 square kilometers. Semnan Province is located in the northern part of Iran and its center is Semnan. Figure 3.1 displays the geographical location of Semnan Province on the map of Iran. Figure 3.2 presents the geographical location of the counties of Semnan Province.

Figure 3.1. Map of Iran and Semnan Province. Retrieved February 24, 2010, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semnan_Province
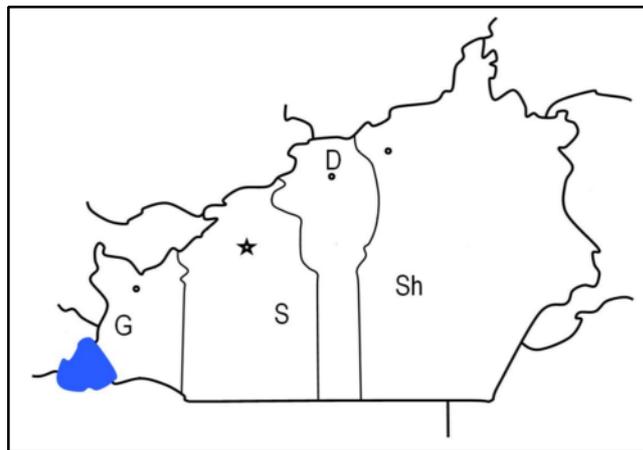

Figure 3.2. Map of the Counties of Semnan Province. Retrieved February, 24, 2010 from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/ Semnan-admin-map

Note: S= Semnan; Sh= Shahroud; G= Garmsar; D= Damghan.

The Semnan Province was selected as the research site because the researcher

was familiar with the teaching context in this province. All the teachers selected were

teaching in Semnan Province; however, they might have come from other areas where

they had done their undergraduate program and where that was the case the researcher

could probe into their experiences through interviews. The second reason for selecting

Semnan Province was because of the language. Persian language is widely spoken in

Semnan Province, while in some other parts of the country other languages such as Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Arabic and etc. are spoken and the researcher is not familiar with the mentioned languages. To sum up, familiarity with the site and sharing a common language were the two reasons for selecting the site.

Participants

The sample of the study comprised of eight high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers working in the Semnan Province, Iran. The study was carried out during the academic year 2009-2010. All the subjects were Iranian and spoke Persian as a first language, and English as a foreign language. Subjects' participation in this study was voluntary. Those who chose to participate in the study were free to decline to answer any questions or to withdraw from the study at any time; there was no penalty or prize based on participation or lack thereof. Interview participants were given some Malaysian handicrafts in appreciation for their time.

The interviewees and the participants in the observations were assured that their identities would not be revealed in the reporting of the interview and observation data. They were also assured that after coding the data, connection back to the individual participant would be almost impossible to trace (Glaser, 1978). Data was securely stored in the researcher's office at her home. Consent forms and data will be preserved on file for five years after completion of the study. The selection process of the participants will be discussed next.

Participant Selection

Eight high school English teachers were selected through purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008) from the list of English teachers in the Semnan Province (n=15) who

had announced their readiness and willingness to participate in the interview and observation sessions, in a consent form sent to them by mail. A total of 90 consent forms were sent to high school English teachers working in the Semnan Province by mail. The researcher gained their contact addresses from the database of high school English teachers available in the Education Department in the Semnan Province. Forty-seven forms were returned in which the teachers had announced their disagreement to participate in the study due to some personal and professional reasons. Twenty-eight forms were not returned at all and the follow-up contact did not end up with any response. Fifteen forms were returned mentioning that they were willing to participate in the study. The researcher selected eight teachers out of fifteen based on various criteria which will be discussed below.

In line with the goal to select a mix of participants, the following criteria were taken into consideration:

a) Participants should come from different academic routes, i.e. English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, and English Translation (ELT, ELL, and ET). This was to investigate whether different routes yielded different outcomes;

b) The participants should include graduates from various preservice teacher education programs (Teacher Training Universities or Comprehensive Universities) to examine if different universities followed different approaches in presenting the EFL method course;

c) The participants should have various levels of education (Undergraduate or Postgraduate); and

d) Participants selected should include both 'recent' graduates and more 'experienced' teachers.

In addition to the above criteria, the participants' willingness to participate in the study was a major determinant in their selection. All the participants were informed of the objective and design of the study and an informed consent form was obtained from them before they participated in the study (see Appendix A).

Three EFL methods course lecturers were also selected through purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008) from the same teacher training university in Semnan Province. Here, the researcher identified those persons in the research setting who had the best information with which to address the present study's research questions and were willing to participate in the interviews (Patton, 2002). It should be noted that these lecturers were not the instructors of the eight focal high school English teachers, but they were selected to provide insights into the EFL methods course, and to complement the findings from the focal teachers. All participants were informed of the objective and design of the study and an informed consent form was obtained from them before they participated in the study (see Appendix A).

Boundary of the Cases

As Merriam (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994) argued, case study happens in a bounded context and therefore there is a need to have a tight case design to prevent indiscriminate data collection. Researchers (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995) suggest that setting boundaries on a case can prevent this explosion of data from occurring. The elements that were used to set the "somewhat indeterminate boundary" of the case in this study included: (a) sampling; (b) context; (c) specific events; and (d) time (Merriam, 2009, p.25). The preliminary aspect that defined the boundary included the sampling operation. Only high school English teachers who were working in Semnan province formed the primary unit of analysis. Second, the context of the case was confined to Semnan Province (Semnan, Shahroud, Damghan, and Garmsar) where the participants

were working. Third, the researcher looked into the practices of high school English teachers to see how they used or adapted their teaching methodology to meet the needs of their classrooms. Time was also featured as a boundary in this case. The data collection was bound between April (2009) to July (2009). Therefore, by bounding some of the abovementioned aspects, the researcher hoped to construct a tighter design for the case in this study as mentioned by Geertz (1973).

Typicality of the Cases

High school English teachers. The eight focal participants were selected because they were regarded as "typical" of the EFL teaching force in the Semnan Province. These teachers were considered "typical" because they came from different academic routes (English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, and English Translation), various preservice teacher education programs (Teacher Training Universities or Comprehensive Universities), different levels of education (Undergraduate or Postgraduate), and various years of teaching experience. These cases constituted "collective case studies" (Stake, 1995) in which "multiple cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue" (Cresswell, 2008, p.465); here the issue was the use or adaptation of the EFL methods course in the classrooms. The participants consisted of five females: Atena, Atusa Nasim, Negin, and Simin as well as three males: Ali, Kiyan, and Reza. The criteria for the selection of these eight teachers have been described in the section on 'participant selection' (see pages 61-63). The profiles below provide insights into the 'characteristics' of each particular case.

Ali. Ali, an experienced male teacher with nine years of teaching experience, possessed a Bachelors degree in English Language Teaching (ELT). In the first place, he had graduated as an Associate degree holder in ELT, and then he continued his

studies and earned his Bachelors degree. He went to two different teacher training universities in Iran for his Associate and Bachelors degrees. He was teaching English at grade levels one and three at public and private high schools. He had not gone to any language institute and his exposure to English was limited to English classes at high schools and universities. He had participated in in-service programs for 120 hours; however as he mentioned, none of these programs was related to the English teaching methods.

Atena. Atena who was a novice female teacher with one year of teaching experience in high school classroom settings had an English Language Teaching (ELT) Bachelors degree from a teacher training university in the capital. She was teaching English at grade levels one and two at a public high school. Although she had limited teaching experience, she was regarded to be a creative and active young teacher at her school. She had not gone to English institutes. She mentioned that since she had been very enthusiastic to learn English, she tried to watch English movies and read English magazines and newspapers in her spare time. Since she was staying in a dormitory with a few of her classmates, they used to communicate in English, even as she called "Broken English." According to her, these activities and materials helped her to improve her English. She had not participated in any inservice programs yet.

Atusa. Atusa was a novice female teacher with two years of teaching experience. She held a Bachelors degree in English Language and Literature (ELL) from one of the prestigious comprehensive universities in the capital. She was teaching English at grade levels one to three at public high schools. She had participated in inservice programs only once for the period of 30 hours; however, it was not related to the language teaching methods.

Kiyan. Kiyan, a novice male teacher with two years of teaching experience, had majored in English Language and Literature (ELL). He was a Bachelors graduate from one of the comprehensive universities in the capital and was currently teaching English at grade level one at public high schools. He had not gone to English institutes prior, during or after his graduation and had not participated in any inservice programs as yet.

Nasim. Nasim was an experienced female teacher who had been teaching English to high school students for fifteen years. She had a Bachelors degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) from a teacher training university in Iran. At present, she was teaching English at grade level three at public and private high schools. She mentioned that her exposure to English was limited to English classes at high schools and universities. Her 90 hours of participation in inservice programs was not related to methods of teaching. She mentioned that the EFL methods course had been the only place where she studied about the methods of teaching English.

Negin. Negin was a female teacher with four years of teaching experience. She was teaching English at grade levels one to three at public high schools. She also had the experience of teaching university-level students. She had received her Bachelors and Masters degrees both in English Language Teaching (ELT) from the same teacher training university in Iran. She went to a language institute to improve her English while she was earning her Bachelors degree in English Language Teaching (ELT). From a total of 60 hours participation in inservice programs, 30 hours had been devoted to introducing current methods in teaching English. According to her, what she learned in that 30 hours helped her to somehow change her instructional method of teaching. She was considering pursuing her advanced education in a doctoral program in TEFL to learn more about her interest.

Reza. Reza was a male teacher with three years of teaching experience. He had received his Bachelors and Masters degrees in English Translation (ET), from the same comprehensive university in Iran. He was teaching English at grade level one at public high schools. Reza was also teaching at private language institutes at elementary levels. He had not gone to English institutes prior, during or after his graduation. Reza had participated in inservice programs twice for the period of 30 hours related to teaching pronunciation but not in language teaching methods and approaches.

Simin. Simin, a female teacher with seven years of teaching experience, had a Bachelors degree in English Language Teaching (ELT). She had graduated from one of the prestigious comprehensive universities in Iran. She was teaching English at grade levels one to three at public and private high schools. Her exposure to English was limited to English classes at high schools and universities. She had participated in inservice programs for 70 hours, not related to methods of teaching English. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the teachers' profiles.

Table 3.1

A Summary of the High School English Teachers' Profiles

Name	Academic Route	Level of Education	Preservice Teacher Education Program	Years of Experience
Ali	ELT	BA	TTU	9
Atena	ELT	BA	TTU	1
Atusa	ELL	BA	CU	2
Kiyan	ELL	BA	CU	2
Nasim	ELT	BA	TTU	15
Negin	ELT	MA	TTU	4
Reza	ET	MA	CU	3
Simin	ELT	BA	CU	7

Note: ELT= English Language Teaching; ET= English Translation; ELL= English Language and Literature; BA= Bachelors of Art; MA= Masters of Art; TTU= Teacher Training University; CU= Comprehensive University.

With reference to the table, four participants majored in ELT, i.e. Ali, Atena, Nasim, and Negin; two in ELL, i.e. Atusa and Kiyan; and one in ET, i.e. Reza. Two of the teachers, Negin and Reza, had Masters degrees and the rest were Bachelors holders. Four participants graduated from teacher training universities and the rest graduated from comprehensive universities. Three of the participants, i.e. Ali, Nasim and Simin had more years of teaching experience in comparison with the others. It is important to distinguish between these teachers because when answering the research questions, the researcher wanted to know if those who graduated from different academic routes and various preservice teacher education programs viewed the EFL methods course differently. She also examined whether those with Masters had taken different approaches towards methodology in comparison with those without Masters.

Eventually, she wanted to investigate if the more experienced teachers responded to things differently.

EFL methods course lecturers. The three complimentary participants were selected because they were regarded as "typical" of the EFL method course lecturers in Semnan Province. These lecturers were considered "typical" because they came from different levels of education (Masters or PhD), and various years of teaching experience.

The first part of the interview (see Appendix D) provided the researcher with the demographic information of the participants including their academic route, level of education, number of years of experience as an EFL instructor, number of years of teaching the EFL methods course, teaching location, and the university graduated. Pseudonyms were used for any names related to the participants, involving the educational institutions where they taught or studied for the protection of their identities. A brief introduction about each participant will be given in the following.

Alireza. Alireza was a senior lecturer with sixteen years of teaching experience at both universities and language institutes. He is a PhD holder in English Language Teaching (ELT) and had graduated from one of the prestigious comprehensive universities in Iran. He was currently teaching as a full-time lecturer. He has been teaching the EFL methods course for the past eight years.

Hamed. Hamed who was a full-time lecturer holds a Masters degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) and had graduated from a teacher training university with

eighteen years of teaching experience at both high schools and universities. He has been teaching the EFL methods course for almost five years.

Milad. Milad was an Associate Professor with twenty years of teaching experience at both high schools and universities. He is a PhD graduate from one of the prestigious comprehensive universities in Iran in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). He used to teach English at high schools before receiving his PhD. After PhD graduation, he was transferred to the current institution where he is a full-time lecturer. He has been teaching the EFL methods course for the past ten years. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the EFL methods course lecturers' profiles.

Table 3.2

A Summary of the EFL Methods Course Lecturers' Profiles

Name	Academic Route	Level of Education	Years of Experience	Years of Experience in Teaching Methods Course
Alireza	ELT	PhD	16	8
Hamed	ELT	MA	18	5
Milad	ELT	PhD	20	10

Note. ELT= English Language Teaching; MA= Masters or Art; PhD= Doctor of Philosophy.

Looking into the demographic data reveals that two lecturers, i.e. Alireza and Milad had PhD and only one, i.e. Hamed had Masters. Milad had more years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course, i.e. ten years, while Alireza and Hamed had eight and five years of experience respectively in teaching the EFL methods course. It is important to distinguish between these lecturers since later in the analysis of the data, the researcher wanted to know if those who had PhD or more years of experience

in teaching the EFL methods course had taken a different approach in teaching the mentioned course.

Sources of Data

Three sources of data were utilized to answer the research questions of the study, namely personal interviews, classroom observation field notes and document analysis. Implementing these data gathering techniques provided data triangulation and supported the validity of the study. Table 3.3 shows an overview of research questions along with data collection sources used to answer them.

Table 3.3

An Overview of Research Questions along with Data Collection Sources

Research Questions	Sources of Data
What were the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in the preservice EFL teacher education program in Iran?	Interviews Document Analysis
How did the EFL methods course contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province?	Interviews Document Analysis
How do high school English teachers in Semnan province, Iran use or adapt the language teaching methods in their classrooms?	Interviews Observation Field Notes Document Analysis

To answer the first research question of the study: "What were the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in the preservice EFL teacher education program in Iran?", the researcher interviewed eight high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers. Three EFL methods course syllabi collected from different preservice EFL teacher education institutions as well as different references used for this course were also examined.

To answer the second research question of the study: "How did the EFL methods course contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province?", the researcher conducted personal interviews with the eight high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers. Different artifacts which were reported to contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in the EFL methods course were also examined.

For answering the third research question: "How do high school English teachers in Semnan province, Iran use or adapt the language teaching methods in their classrooms?", the necessary data was obtained by conducting personal interviews (pre- and post- observation), classroom observations and analysis of the high school textbooks. The participants here were the eight high school English teachers.

The advantage as well as the development of the above-mentioned research instruments will be discussed in the following.

Interviews

To understand high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers, the researcher implemented a semi-structured one-on-one interview research method because it allowed the researcher to probe deeper into the unexpected topics or issues during the interview to further perceive the interviewee's perspective and experiences.

Interviews provide opportunities for researchers to probe particular variables for detailed descriptions. Concerning the value of data collected through interviews, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) argued that the potential strength of interviews lies in the fact that interviews provide opportunities to learn about the things that might be missed by the

researcher. Furthermore, data collected through interviews will help researchers to explore alternative explanations of what is seen.

Implementing a one-on-one interview allows the researcher to attain rich and personalized information (Mason, 2002). It also impedes the interviewee from the social impacts of a peer because a peer's answer might influence his or her answers and thoughts to the questions asked by an interviewer (Creswell, 2005). Creswell defined semi-structured interviews as "interviews in which the researcher asks some questions that are closed ended and some that are open ended" (p.598). Semi-structured interviews were described by O'Leary (2004, p.164) as follows:

> As the name suggests, these interviews are neither fully fixed nor fully free, and are perhaps best seen as flexible. Interviewers generally start with some defined questioning plan, but pursue a more conversational style of interview that may see questions answered in an order more natural to the flow of conversation. They may also start with a few defined questions but be ready to pursue any interesting tangents that may develop.

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989), the "semi-" ness of semi-structured interviews permits a level of freedom in questions and responses, which upholds discovery; the "structured" part gives a means to ensure consistency across interviews. As Arksey and Knight (1999) argued, in semi-structured interviews, the flow of conversation and share of views is natural, and the interviewers can ask follow-up questions and explore meanings and areas of interest that emerge. The order of the questions is not fixed in semi-structured interviews; however, it is still controlled by a list of questions and the topics required to be covered during the course of interview (cited in Luo, 2003). However, if all the interview questions were open-ended and the interview was unstructured, the interview might go in various directions as new questions emerge during the course of interview (Glesne, 1999). It might cause the

interview to be unfocused (Seidman, 1998). In developing the interview questions, caution was exercised to ensure that the questions were clear, while not being suggestive, leading, imposing or threatening (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

Using a semi-structured one-on-one interview helped the researcher to explore high school English teachers' and EFL methods course lecturers' conceptions and experiences about the contribution of the EFL methods course in equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills of different language teaching methodologies as well as the use or adaptation of these methods in real classes. A detailed description of the content of interviews (Appendices B-D) will be presented as follows.

The researcher developed three "interview protocols" (Creswell, 2005, p.222). Most of the interview questions were of open-ended nature. The first part of the interviews (see Appendices B-D) comprised of the date, time and place of the interview, interviewer, and interviewee's name using a pseudonym to protect the participant's privacy and confidentiality as well as some demographic questions pertaining to the participant's gender, major, years of teaching experience and so on.

The first part of the pre-observation interview (see Appendix B) provided the researcher with the demographic information of the participants including their gender, degree, university graduated, major, teaching location, number of years of experience as well as grade level teaching. Questions one to three provided the researcher with some background information about the high school English teachers including the place where they learned English (school, university or language institutes), and the inservice programs they participated. Questions four and five elicited some information about the language teaching methods that the high school teachers were taught in the EFL methods course as well as the reference books used for this course. Question six

inquired if there was any emphasis from the EFL methods course lecturers' side on utilizing any of the language teaching methods in teachers' future classes. Question seven asked whether the language teaching methods had been contextualized in the EFL methods course. Questions eight and nine inquired if the teachers had performed microteaching and had practicum. Question ten aimed at examining how the social context of the EFL methods course had contributed to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province, Iran. Question eleven asked if the teachers felt competent enough to implement what they had been taught about language teaching methods in the real situation of their classes. Questions twelve asked about the role of other social contexts, such as schools in teachers' learning. Questions thirteen and fourteen inquired about the language teaching method(s) the teachers used or adapted in their classes and their rational for that selection. Question fifteen asked the teachers if they followed a lesson plan for their teaching activity. In the last question, question sixteen, the participants were asked to add any other thing they liked to share with the researcher.

During the post-observation interviews that were immediately conducted after class observations (see Appendix C), the high school English teachers were first asked to briefly describe what they did in the classroom, and then they were required to justify the reason of discrepancies, if there was any, between what they mentioned in the pre-observation interview to be their method of teaching and what they actually practiced in classes, as observed by the researcher. Afterwards, the researcher inquired about their recommendations for the improvement of preservice EFL teacher education programs for high school English teachers in Iran. Finally, the participants were asked to add any other thing if they wished.

In the interview with the EFL methods course lecturers (see Appendix D), the first question was related to the variety of the language teaching methods and approaches that the lecturers were introducing to their student teachers in the EFL methods course. The lecturers were asked to mention the name of their reference books for this course in the second question. In questions three to five, the researcher asked if the lecturers were emphasizing on the utilization of any of the methods, if they were trying to contextualize them, and if they were providing the student teachers with microteaching opportunities. In question six, the researcher asked the lecturers if they were using any other artifacts besides the textbooks for teaching the EFL methods course. Finally, they were asked to add any other comment if they wished.

A few pilot interviews with high school English teachers (n=3) and EFL methods course lecturers (n=1) were conducted to ensure the quality and validity of the interview questions. This group was chosen because of its similarity with the target participants in the study. The participants' feedback pointed out unfamiliar terms and unclear questions. Their verbal and written comments and suggestions provided a useful reference for the modification of the interview questions so that the validity of the study would increase. Interview questions were adapted based on the information elicited from the pilot study. Copies of the interview questions with high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers are included in Appendices B-D.

Observations

Gebhard (1999) defined classroom observation as "non judgmental description of classroom events that can be analyzed and given interpretation" (p.35). Conducting observations may provide the researcher with more objective information pertaining to the research topic (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992)

maintained that classroom observation provides the researcher with the opportunity to have direct access into teachers' real instructional practices, mentioning that "we need to observe teachers in action using their knowledge in the real setting of the classroom" (p.258). The aim of the observation in the context of this study was not to evaluate the teaching.

Observing the high school English teachers was helpful for the researcher to be part of the English classes culture and community by sitting in the class and to examine if what the teachers said in the interview could be observed practically in their classroom interactions. It helped the researcher "to understand the dynamics of the context of the class, to know more about individual participants, and to get more information in depth by belonging to the specific culture" (Wallestad, 2009, p.85) which provided the researcher with a "thick description" (Denzin, 1989, p.83) and could increase the reliability of the study.

An observational protocol was developed by the researcher for taking field notes during the observation (See Appendix E). The design and development of an observational protocol ensures that the researcher has an organized means for recording and keeping observational field notes (Creswell, 2008). The first part of the protocol included the time, date and location of the observation, observer and observee's name using a pseudonym. In the second part, based on the impressions and interpretations of the activities and events under observation, the researcher drew inferences about the prevailing teaching method of the observee and that whether he/she was competent in utilizing that method. When conducting observations, the researcher was careful not to violate legal or ethical protections (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) (see Appendix Q for letter of introduction and Appendix R for the entry permission).

Documents

According to Spindler and Spindler (1992), a good researcher is "also a good collector of artifacts, products, documents -anything that can be conceivably related to the object of study" (p.67). They illustrated that while the immediate value of documents and artifacts may not be known, their importance is often realized during data analysis. Furthermore, as Valenzuela (1999) argued, most of the supporting documents never make their way into the final pages of a study, rather they are used to inform and support analysis and findings (cited in Gallo-Fox, 2009, p.62).

Analysis of various documents including the syllabi of the EFL methods course, and artifacts used in this course helped the researcher gain better insights into what was taught regarding the language teaching methodologies and what type of readings and activities the student teachers had in their EFL methods course during preservice EFL teacher education. Analysis of the Iranian high school English textbooks also shed light on how the structure of the high school English textbooks might affect the teachers' selection of teaching methodology.

Data Collection

Three types of research instruments were utilized to collect the data to answer the research questions of the study, namely interview protocols, observation field notes and document analysis guidelines. The process of data collection will be discussed next.

Interviews

The researcher personally carried out one-on-one semi-structured interviews with eight high school English teachers twice: pre- and post-observation and three EFL methods

course lecturers once. The interviews took place between April 2009 and July 2009, which was near the end of the second educational semester 2009-2010 in Iran. The advantage of personally conducting the interviews was that the researcher was able to interact with the participants personally; therefore, she could gain "a feel of the tone of the interviews and openness or reservation of the interviewees." She was able to take measures to make the participants feel at ease and safe in sharing their views. She also had the freedom to track the flow of the discussion rather than an organized script so that she could maximize her interaction with the participants (Clark-Goff, 2008, p.19).

The pre-observation interviews (Appendices B) lasted approximately forty-five minutes per high school English teacher. The interviews with EFL methods course lecturers lasted for about one and a half hours (Appendix D). All the interviews took place at a convenient time and place as proposed by the high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers. Before the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of her interview and asked the interviewees to sign the detailed consent form (See Appendix A).

The majority of the semi-structured interviews (n=8) were audio-taped. As Wallestad (2009) maintained, "the use of participants' actual words in the qualitative study would strengthen the interpretation of the data and its argument" (p.124). However, two lecturers and one teacher did not allow the researcher to record their voices due to some personal and professional reasons. In those cases, the researcher tried to jot down the content of the interview.

The researcher also took brief memos during each interview, since the malfunction of the tape recorder during the interview (Creswell, 2005), might cause her

to lose some significant information that her participants might provide. Moreover, as Graue and Walsh (1998) argued, "memos are written notes to yourself about the thoughts you have about the data and your understanding of them" (p.166). Therefore, taking memos helped the researcher to recall the information and her thoughts easier as well as "cultivate her understanding of the events and classroom interactions" later (Wallestad, 2009, p.124).

As a female Iranian English high school teacher and university lecturer, the researcher came from a background that was very similar to the participants. The expectation was that they would be open in sharing their view points with the researcher because she seemed to be very much like them. At first, the participants were not confident enough to share their views and concerns, after they were reassured that they could be honest without fear of reprisal, they began to share their experiences and concerns, which then opened the floor to other questions. It is worthy to note that, the more experienced EFL teachers were more nervous in comparison with the younger ones and the younger teachers were more willing to share their views, concerns and experiences.

Applying Berg's (1989) suggestion in interviewing, rapport was first established with the interviewees and permission was sought to audio-tape the interviews. During the interview, the researcher followed the flow of discussion and listened actively to what they mentioned. She asked the participants to present detailed information if their responses were too simple, and when necessary she asked them to explain and clarify some of their statements. The researcher resisted forming hasty assumptions and conclusions while consciously looking out for disconfirming and counter-intuitive

views as well as new ones (Berg, 1989). She answered the issues raised by the interviewees, but tried to avoid imposing opinions and making judgments.

To confirm accuracy, the researcher made a point to restate or summarize what was said before moving to the next question. This served also as a probe for the interviewee to further clarify what he or she had already said. The summary also allowed for a better transition to the next question. In summarizing, the researcher tried to connect and pull together and accentuate the contradictions, dissonances, multiple voices, etc. In short, validity enhancing procedures (suggested by Wolcott, 1990) and the essentials of good fieldwork were consciously adhered to.

Since the participants were required to describe complex thoughts, ideas, perceptions, and experiences in an oral form, i.e. interviews, the researcher thought it would be difficult for the participants to use English, their foreign language. As an English learner and teacher herself, she was aware of the anxiety regarding the use of a foreign language. Such anxiety would likely disturb the flow of thoughts and ideas and prevent the participants from articulating what they actually wanted to convey (Spradley, 1979). Thus, she considered the use of Persian as a means of avoiding such possible language-related problems. However, one of the English teachers preferred to speak in English; after a few minutes he too switched to the Persian language.

Observations

At the time of observations (May 2009 to June 2009), which was near the end of the second educational semester 2009-2010 in Iran, the eight English teachers were teaching at different high schools in Shahroud, Semnan, Damghan and Garmsar, the counties of Semnan Province. Due to the issue of third-party permission, the researcher could not video or audio-tape the classroom sessions.

After the negotiation with the teachers on the role of the researcher in the classroom, it was decided that she became a complete observer, one who observes without participating (Creswell, 2008), as well as a reflective interpreter (Boostrom, 1994). Boostrom proposed that researchers are highly subjective makers of meaning, with eyes to see and ears to hear in the classroom. By this, he means that researchers should not only see what is in the classroom, but also look for possible meanings in what is there (cited in Luo, 2003). The teachers agreed to permit the researcher to observe the lessons provided she merely conducted her observations from the back of the class. The researcher accepted the condition and the limitations of this approach were complemented by interviews with teachers immediately after the observation. Moreover, as the focus of the study was on teaching methodology (and not student learning), the researcher did not have to move around the class to monitor students' performance.

The researcher observed the participants' instructions for three consecutive class periods with a three-week window at a convenient time suggested by them. She carried out observation during the same class period each week and extended it over the entire class, i.e. ninety minutes. The classroom observation enabled the researcher to "draw inferences about someone's meaning and perspective that one couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data" (Maxwell, 1996, p.76). As Maxwell argued, the teachers might act differently in the classroom in comparison with what they would say in the interview. They might also indicate something that "they hesitated to or were reluctant to state directly in interviews" (p.76). Hence, classroom observation provided the researcher with alternative interpretations to see the data and to search for the same phenomena (high school English teachers' understanding and experiences of the language teaching methodologies) from various angles.

Some of the teachers felt nervous being observed for the first time since they had not been observed much. They overcame their anxiety after getting more acquainted with the researcher and being more familiar with having an observer in the class. Being clear that the purpose of her observations was not to evaluate them, the teachers were confident to be themselves in her presence. Moreover, the observations were arranged to concur with their schedules and avoided any disruptions to the class activity. The researcher did not interact either verbally or non-verbally with the students or the teachers during the observations. The students in the classes observed were aware of her presence in class but their interaction and behaviors did not show that they were influenced by her observation.

During the observations, the researcher took field notes as her primary method of observation, since the audio or video taping of the classes was not allowed. The descriptive field notes included the details of classroom settings, teaching activities, or events in the context of her observations. As she documented the teachers' instructional methods, she also inscribed her personal thoughts, hunches, ideas, feelings or impressions which emerged during the observations. According to Creswell (2008), these notes are referred to as reflective fieldnotes. She paid particular attention to nonverbal behaviors as well as verbal behaviors, avoiding evaluative and summarizing wording in the process of description. Rather than abstract generalizations, the researcher aimed at concrete details (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995).

While observing, the researcher was repeating in her mind, "What is going on here?"As a primary observer, the researcher took notes and tried to see and capture the whole class's dynamics and interactions. First, she noticed when the practice was held, the environment, the length, the participants and their roles. Afterwards, the researcher

described the activities, topics and tools of the program. Eventually, she observed the level of student participation, what was going on, and how the students interacted with the activity, the teacher and with one another.

She tried to minimize the researcher bias by her prolonged engagement, being present for the entire class time which was ninety minutes, as well as her persistent observation as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). By her prolonged engagement, the researcher tried to build trust with teachers and students, and check for misinformation originating from anomalies introduced by the researcher or the participants (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The anomalies were probed through a process of triangulation of data from observations and follow-up interviews. The researcher asked herself whether the data was consistent and if not the reasons for the inconsistencies were explored. By triangulating the data from multiple sources the researcher attempted to reduce possible bias that might arise from an overreliance on one source of data. Table 3.3, on page 71, highlights the various sources of data which are used to answer each research question.

Persistent observation allowed the researcher to identify the most relevant characteristics, attributes, and traits to the phenomena under study (which was the use or adaptation of the teaching methodology by the teachers) and focus on them extensively. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued, engaging in persistent observation assists the researcher in separating relevant from irrelevant observations. In fact, as they maintained while prolonged engagement gives scope, persistent observation provides depth.

Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the data was ensured through member-checks, i.e. the participants of the study verified the provisional concepts and categories as well as the final version. The accuracy of all the translated data that is displayed in the thesis has been verified by consulting a fluent bilingual speaker of Farsi and English who is also a university professor. Thus, the inter-rater reliability of the translation and coding was established.

Post-Observation Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with the high school English teachers immediately after the field observations. She asked the teachers to remember what they had done so as to learn about the meaning of their teaching actions and how the latter relates to their conceptions and experiences. She also took notes during the interviews. The post-observation interviews occurred in the educational institution where the teachers taught. Each interview lasted for approximately twenty minutes.

Documents

Three types of documents were collected for this study, i.e. the syllabi of the EFL methods course, the artifacts used in the course as well as Iranian high school English textbooks.

To collect the syllabi and artifacts of the EFL methods course, the researcher sent a cover letter asking for the syllabi of the EFL methods course and relevant materials to the directors of nine preservice EFL teacher education programs in Iran, listed in the directory of selecting fields of study in the University Entrance Examination (UEE) or *Konkur* of the year 2009. Two responses were received from the first mailing in May 2009. The second mailing in July 2009 yielded one more response.

The researcher provided the directors with a hand phone number, postal address and Email in case they needed to ask questions related to the study (See Appendix F). The course syllabi provided the researcher with a broad picture of what was taught and what type of reading and assignments the student teachers had in their EFL methods course during preservice EFL teacher education.

The researcher asked the high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers to provide her with the artifacts used in the EFL methods course. Artifacts and materials that were implemented in the EFL methods course helped the researcher to know the content of the class, the nature of the tasks and activities given during the class, and how the student teachers used the artifacts to accomplish the tasks (Wallestad, 2009).

Regarding the textbooks, since the researcher herself was previously an English teacher, she got an easy access to the high school English textbooks. Examining the content of the textbooks helped the researcher better understand the teachers' actions in the classrooms.

Data Analysis

As Merriam (2001) noted, "without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating" (p.162). The researcher carried out data analysis during and after the data collection. The researcher followed the guidelines suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994, pp.10-12) (See Figure 3.3). Miles and Huberman defined data

analysis "as consisting of three current flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification" (p.10).
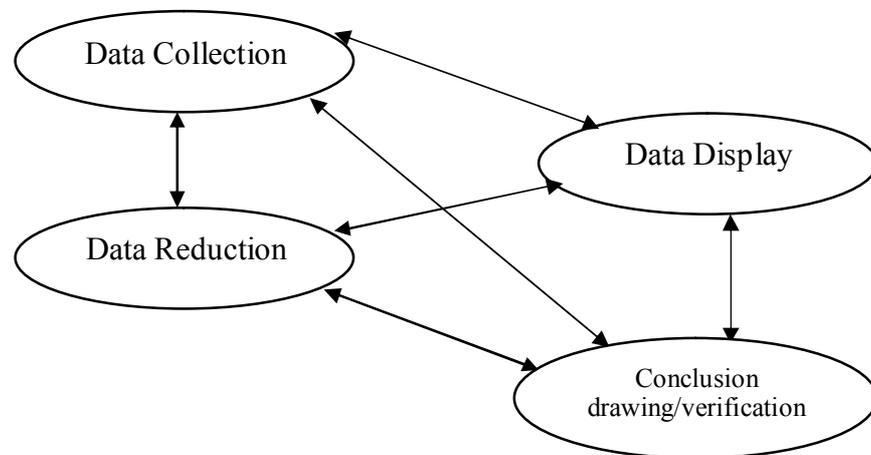

Figure 3.3. Components of Data Analysis. Adapted from *"Qualitative Data Analysis (2nd ed.),"* by M. B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, 1994, p.12. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Interview Transcripts

The researcher personally transcribed interviews to best represent the dynamic nature of the live conversation. Since the interviews were conducted in Persian, the transcripts were also written in Persian. In the data analysis process, the researcher used the original transcripts written in Persian. However, some of the excerpts that were selected from those transcripts, in order to support the findings and discussions were translated into English from Persian by the researcher.

In processing the interview data, the researcher was constantly aware of the importance of maintaining an open mind to the expressed views and to resist being influenced by her own views and assumptions. While transcribing the recorded interviews into written text, care was taken to listen to each of the taped interviews and type the verbatim statements. When this process was complete, each tape was listened

to once more looking for possible errors in the transcribed text. For the purpose of obtaining a full understanding of the material, the researcher repeatedly and carefully read the transcribed interviews. Each of the transcripts was returned to the participant for his or her review and verification. None of them made changes to the transcripts.

Since a large portion of the data was in hard copy, the researcher selected to do the coding by hand rather than electronically, implementing marginal notes. Some coding categories were driven by the literature review, such as *"situated social interactions"*, while the others, like *"familiarity with EFL teaching methods"* emerged from the data as she read through the interview transcripts, observation field notes and documents. She used three types of coding, i.e. open coding, axial coding and selective coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the main purposes of open coding are "to conceptualize and categorize data". Axial coding which is the second stage of data analysis is "the process of relating categories to their subcategories . . . linking a category at the level of properties and dimensions" (p.123). Selective coding is the final stage of data analysis which is "the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (p.116). For example, in this study *"theoretical aspects of the EFL methods course"* emerged as the core category. The researcher also implemented the constant comparative technique; creating meaning by moving between understanding and data. The participants of the study verified the provisional concepts and categories as well as the final version.

Observation Field Notes

After conducting the observations, the field notes were coded and synthesized. As with interviews, explicit connections were made between the research objectives and the

summary findings drawn from the raw data, and then the data was examined for emerging themes that suited the objective and the data type of the study.

Documents

For data analysis of the documents, the researcher first identified each category of documents and coded them. After numbering and coding them, she categorized the themes that emerged from the documents. The categories that emerged from the data analysis of the interview transcripts, class observation field notes and the collected documents were examined in relation to the research questions raised in the study.

Data Triangulation

Denzin (1978) used the term triangulation to define the combination of data collection sources. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) noted that the data collected through multiple sources enhance the trustworthiness, thereby increasing confidence in research findings. Marshall and Rossman (1989) mentioned that using a combination of data sources increases the validity of the findings. According to Maxwell (1996), triangulation helps the researcher to decrease his or her own biases in the conclusion, which may increase the validity of the study's assessment. After analysis, the data, i.e. interview transcripts, observation field notes and documents, were triangulated for obtaining a detailed and comprehensive picture of the findings.

Trustworthiness

The issues of validity and reliability are the concerns of quantitative researchers to judge the quality of a quantitative study and to see how their findings would be generalized to a larger population. As Maxwell (1996) maintained, "they would create a

research design by controlling potential validity threats to the study as much as possible, in advance" (p.86). On the other hand, in a qualitative study, subjectivity is one of the main issues to take into account (Glesne, 1999). As the subjectivity in the study decreases, the validity and reliability of the study increase (Wallestad, 2009). According to Maxwell (1996), "the validity is a goal rather than a product" (p.86). Validity has a relative meaning and it changes depending on the researcher's goal of the study and its circumstances. There is no qualitative study that is one hundred percent bias-free (Maxwell, 1996).

The significance of "trustworthiness" in a qualitative study is emphasized by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.289) as well, which may be parallel to the notion of validity and reliability in a qualitative study. According to Seale (1999), the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p.266) in "a good qualitative study" (quoted in Wallestad, 2009, p.139).

To establish the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher collected the data from multiple sources, such as individual interviews, observations and collection of EFL methods course syllabi, course artifacts and high school English textbooks, which helped her to make the data analysis as accurate as possible. For drawing a comprehensive picture, the data from various sources were triangulated.

Member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was another technique used by the researcher when collecting and analyzing the data to increase the validity of the study. According to Lincoln and Guba,

> The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups

from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (p.314).

The researcher asked the participants to verify the transcriptions of their interviews as well as the provisional and final versions of the data analysis for feedback. They provided the researcher with feedback on the accuracy of the information. This was helpful for her to reduce her own possible misinterpretation of what her participants meant in the interviews or what they did and said in class during her observation.

Lastly, since the spoken and/or written datasets were in Persian, the researcher did the analysis in the original language and translated them into English for display. The accuracy of all the translated data that is displayed in the thesis has been verified by consulting a fluent bilingual speaker of Farsi and English who is also a university professor. Thus, the inter-rater reliability of the translation and coding was established.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of data that answered each of the research questions, and begins with the demographic information of the participants, followed by findings. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in the preservice EFL teacher education program in Iran?

2. How did the EFL methods course contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province?

3. How do high school English teachers in Semnan province, Iran use or adapt the language teaching methods in their classrooms?

Demographic Information of the Participants

High School English Teachers

The researcher selected a total of eight high school English teachers from Semnan, Shahroud, Damghan and Garmsar, the counties of Semnan Province, for the purpose of conducting interviews and observations through purposeful sampling. Willingness to share their views and experiences with the researcher was the major criteria in selecting the participants (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

In the present study, five out of eight high school English teachers were females and three out of eight were males. Five out of eight participants majored in English Language Teaching (ELT), two out of eight majored in English Language and

Literature (ELL), and one out of eight majored in English Translation (ET). Six out of eight participants had Bachelors degrees and two possessed Masters. All of the participants had graduated from Iranian universities including teacher training and comprehensive universities. The participants' years of teaching experience varied between one and fifteen years. Five participants had 0-5 years of experience, two participants had 6- 10 years of experience and one participant had 11-15 years of teaching experience.

The participants in the study represented a diversity of gender, major, experience and teaching location, which may be more representative of the high school EFL teaching population in the Semnan Province than a group of EFL teachers situated in a specific work context. A summary of the demographic information of the participants is presented in table 4.1. The researcher used pseudonyms for any names related to the participants.

Table 4.1

Demographic Information of the High School English Teachers

Name	Academic Route	Level of Education	Preservice Teacher Education Program	Years of Experience
Ali	ELT	BA	TTU	9
Atena	ELT	BA	TTU	1
Atusa	ELL	BA	CU	2
Kiyan	ELL	BA	CU	2
Nasim	ELT	BA	TTU	15
Negin	ELT	MA	TTU	4
Reza	ET	MA	CU	3
Simin	ELT	BA	CU	7

Note: ELT= English Language Teaching; ET= English Translation; ELL= English Language and Literature; BA= Bachelors of Art; MA= Masters of Art; TTU= Teacher Training University; CU= Comprehensive University.

With reference to the table, four participants majored in ELT, i.e. Ali, Atena, Nasim, and Negin; two in ELL, i.e. Atusa and Kiyan; and one in ET, i.e. Reza. Two of the teachers, Negin and Reza, had Masters degrees and the rest were Bachelors holders. Four participants graduated from teacher training universities and the rest graduated from comprehensive universities. Three of the participants, i.e. Ali, Nasim and Simin had more years of teaching experience in comparison with the others. It is important to distinguish between these teachers because when answering the research questions, the researcher wanted to know if those who graduated from different academic routes and various preservice teacher education programs viewed the EFL methods course differently. She also examined whether those with Masters had taken different approaches towards methodology in comparison with those without Masters.

Eventually, she wanted to investigate if the more experienced teachers responded to things differently.

EFL Methods Course Lecturers

Three EFL methods course lecturers were also selected for the interviews from the same location, Semnan Province. All the participants were males, majoring in English Language Teaching (ELT) graduated from Iranian teacher training and comprehensive universities. Two out of three had PhD and one was a Masters degree holder. Their years of teaching experience varied between 16 and 20 years, while their years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course differed from five to ten years. A summary of the demographic information of the participants is presented in table 4.2. The researcher used pseudonyms to describe all the participants for the protection of their identities.

Table 4.2

Demographic Information of the EFL Methods Course Lecturers

Name	Academic Route	Level of Education	Years of Experience	Years of Experience in Teaching Methods Course
Alireza	ELT	PhD	16	8
Hamed	ELT	MA	18	5
Milad	ELT	PhD	20	10

Note. ELT= English Language Teaching; MA= Masters or Art; PhD= Doctor of Philosophy.

Looking into the demographic data reveals that two lecturers, i.e. Alireza and Milad had PhD and only one, i.e. Hamed had Masters. Milad had more years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course, i.e. ten years, while Alireza and Hamed

had eight and five years of experience respectively in teaching the EFL methods course. It is important to distinguish between these lecturers since later in the analysis of the data the researcher wanted to know if those who had PhD or more years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course had taken a different approach in teaching the mentioned course.

Possessing more information in the field of ELT and willingness to share their views and experiences with the researcher were the main criteria in choosing the participants, since "understanding requires openness to experience and a willingness to engage in a dialogue with one that challenges our self-understandings" (Schewandt, 1999, p.458).

As a qualitative study, the number of the participants (eight high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers) was sufficient (Miles and Huberman, 1994) in order to draw a substantial portrait of the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in preservice EFL teacher education programs in Iran, the contribution of this course to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province, and the use or adaptation of the language teaching methods by the high school English teachers in their classrooms in Semnan province, Iran. Here, the researcher makes no pretensions of generalization to the larger population. All of the interviews and observations were conducted by the researcher from April 2009 to July 2009.

Findings

Research Question One

The primary purpose of research question one: "What were the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in the preservice EFL teacher education program in Iran?" was

to examine the high school English teachers' conceptions and experiences about the main characteristics of the EFL methods course. To achieve this objective, the researcher examined the syllabi of the EFL methods course, the reference books used for the mentioned course and the lecturers' approach in presenting the EFL teaching methodology.

This research question is answered with data from documents comprising the syllabi of the EFL methods course as well as various references used for this course; and interviews with the eight high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers. The interview data came from the interview questions (4-9) and (1-5) found in Appendices (B) and (D) respectively. Following the scripted questions, the researcher asked the participants if they had any other comments to add to their answers.

In order to answer research question one, the researcher first discussed the analysis of the EFL methods course syllabi and the reference textbooks required for this course. The results of the interviews with the high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers are presented next.

Analysis of the EFL methods course syllabi. Five areas were addressed in three EFL methods course syllabi collected from preservice EFL teacher education institutions, namely course description, course objectives, course requirements, required course readings and course grading criteria (see Appendices N-P). Henceforth, the researcher will identify these three syllabi as A, B and C.

Course description. "Building knowledge about the EFL teaching methods and approaches" and "dealing with the techniques of teaching the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing", were given as course description in all the collected syllabi (see Appendices N-P).

Course objectives. "Introducing the students to the methods and approaches of teaching EFL", "familiarizing the students with the techniques of teaching four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing" and "providing students with classroom-like experience" through microteaching were given as the course objectives in all the syllabi (see Appendices N-P). Although the third course objective, i.e. providing classroom-like experience for students was not specifically mentioned in the objective section of syllabus (B), in the course requirement section, the students were required to do "microteaching" which actually referred to providing classroom experience for students (see Appendix O).

As data suggested, there were three goals identified in the collected syllabi of the EFL methods course and they referred to different aspects of the methods program. The first one focused on content area knowledge, while the second and third objectives dealt with procedural and practical knowledge.

Course requirements. In syllabus (A), course requirements comprised of "class participation, final examination" as well as "microteaching" (see Appendix N), while in syllabus (B), "attendance, midterm examination, final examination" and "microteaching" were referred to as the course requirements (see Appendix O). In syllabus (C), the students were required to "participate in class discussions, attend the class, carry out the microteaching and sit for midterm and final examinations" (see Appendix P). In all the three syllabi, the students were required to "plan and teach a 10 to 20 minutes language lesson" (see Appendices N-P).

Required course readings. In the following table, the list of the required reading resources for the EFL methods course, as it was given in the collected syllabi (A, B and C) is presented. At least, three reference materials were referred to as required in each of the examined syllabi. Syllabi (B) and (C) included some recommended texts as well (see Table 4.3). As Grosse (1991) argued, "the fact that a course pack of readings is the most frequently used instructional material indicates a general feeling that existing texts are inadequate in some ways" (p.39). Examination of the objectives of the course syllabi showed strong similarities between the course objectives and the content of the six frequently required books.

Table 4.3

Required and Recommended Course Readings for the EFL Methods Course

No.	Book Title	Syllabi
1	Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Regents.	A (Required) C (Recommended) B (Recommended)
2	Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.	A (Required) B (Required) C (Required)
3	Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory and Practice*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich.	B (Required) C (Required)
4	Finocchiaro, M. & Bonoma, M. (1973). *The Foreign Language Learner: A Guide for Teachers*. New York: Regents Publication.	B (Recommended)
5	Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.	B (Required) C (Required)
6	Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	A (Required) B (Required) C (Required)

With reference to the table, Celce-Murcia's (1991) and Richards and Rodgers's (2001) books were required in all three syllabi, while Chastain (1988) and Larsen-Freeman (2000) had the second frequency. A description of the contents of these books will be presented in the following.

"Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching" written by Larsen-Freeman (2000) is an overview of language teaching methods and the principles underlying them that have been current at one time or another, such as the Grammar Translation, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method, Silent Way, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response and Communicative Language Teaching. The text also covers some current approaches in language teaching methodology, like Content-based, Task-based and Participatory Approaches. It also contains a chapter on learning strategy training, Cooperative Learning, and Multiple Intelligences.

"Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching" written by Richards and Rodgers (2001), looks at the major approaches and methods in language teaching, such as Grammar Translation, Audio-lingualism, Communicative Language Teaching, and the Natural Approach. It examines each approach and method in terms of its theory of language and language learning, goals, syllabi, teaching activities, teacher and learner roles, materials, and classroom techniques. It also has several chapters on the whole language, multiple intelligences, neurolinguistic programming, competency-based language teaching, cooperative language learning, content-based instruction, task-based language teaching, and the Postmethods era.

The examination of the content of these books revealed that in Larsen-Freeman's (2000) and Richards and Rodgers's (2001) works, particular language teaching

methodologies were almost exclusively dealt with which is highly in congruence with the first objective of the EFL methods course mentioned in the collected syllabi.

"Principles of Language Learning and Teaching" written by Brown (1994) is a textbook on the theoretical foundations of language teaching. It comprises of issues and theories of second and first language acquisition. Among the language teaching methodologies he has dealt with the Grammar Translation Method.

"Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language" edited by Celce-Murcia (1991), provides an overview of teaching methodology, specifically communicative language teaching approach, as well as language skills and integrated approaches. It also has chapters entitled focus on the learner, and skills for teachers which are day to day issues for English teachers.

"The Foreign Language Learner: A Guide for Teachers" authored by Finocchiaro and Bonoma (1973) establishes theoretical foundations for language teaching and provides the novice or practicing teachers with step by step procedures useful in developing communication skills and cultural insights in learners.

Looking into the content of these latter textbooks showed that they were mainly about the theory and practice of language learning, approaches to teaching the four language skills, and specific methodologies, which are in accordance with the first and second objectives mentioned in the collected syllabi. As it could be understood from Table 4.3 (page 99), in each syllabus examined, at least one book exclusively related to the characteristics of language teaching methods and two books concerning the theories

of language learning and teaching and approaches to teaching the language skills were required as course readings.

Course grading criteria. The grading criteria varied across the collected course syllabi (see Appendices N-P). The identified patterns of assessment system are presented in the following table (4.4). It is worthy to note that the academic system of grading in Iran is based on a 0-20 scale.

Table 4.4

Grading Criteria for the EFL Methods Course

List of Responsibilities	Weighting (in mark out of 20)
Syllabus A	
Class participation	2
Microteaching (Maximum 15 minutes)	3
Final examination	15
Syllabus B	
Midterm examination	5
Final examination	12
Microteaching (between 10 to 20 minutes)	2
Attendance	1
Syllabus C	
Class participation	1
Attendance	1
Microteaching (Maximum 20 minutes)	3
Midterm examination	5
Final examination	10

With reference to the table, the final examination had a weight higher than all the other components and if one adds the midterm examination to it as well, it will be even higher. In fact, midterm and final examinations which are highly related to assessing the content knowledge of students regarding the EFL teaching methodology were bearing more marks in comparison to microteaching which focuses on the pedagogical content knowledge aspect. Therefore, as it could be concluded from the

data, the practical knowledge was not given its due emphasis in the syllabi of the EFL methods course.

Findings of the interviews. Two major themes were identified from the analysis of the data obtained from interviews with the focal participants of the study, namely the eight high school English teachers. The findings of interviews with the EFL methods course lecturers were only used to further support the study's findings. These themes were identified through a process of coding and categorizing the interview data. Some coding categories were driven by the literature review, such as *"decontextualization of the language teaching methods"* (see pages 119-120), while the others, like *"familiarity with EFL teaching methods"* (see page 104) emerged from the data as the researcher read through the interview transcripts, observation field notes and documents. The researcher used three types of coding, i.e. open coding, axial coding and selective coding. For example, in this study *"theoretical aspects of the EFL methods course"* emerged as the core category (see Appendix S). The researcher also implemented the constant comparative techniques. The participants of the study verified the provisional concepts and categories as well as the final version.

Based on the above procedures, the two main themes identified were: theoretical and practical aspects of the EFL methods course. Under the theoretical aspects, two sub-themes were identified, namely "familiarity with EFL teaching methods", and "reference books for the EFL methods course". Under the practical aspects, one sub-theme emerged which was "decontextualization of the language teaching methods".

Theoretical aspects of the EFL methods course. A detailed account of the interview findings related to the first theme, i.e. "theoretical aspect of the EFL methods course" is presented as follows.

Familiarity with EFL teaching methods. Participants' responses revealed that seven out of eight high school English teachers were taught "almost all of the language teaching methods", such as the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Community Language Learning, Silent Way, Suggestopedia and Total Physical Response presented in their reference textbooks for the EFL methods course.

For instance, Atusa who had done her Bachelors program in one of the capital's universities two years ago, noted that she was taught "all the language teaching methods" and recalled the Grammar Translation, Audio-lingual, Communicative Language Teaching, Community Language Learning and Silent Way Methods, as examples. As Atusa argued, she was fortunate that she became familiar with different EFL teaching methods in her methods course, among which she could choose the ones which best suited her students (29 April, 2009).

In a same line, Nasim who had completed her study in one of the teacher training universities fifteen years ago also reminisced, "We were taught all the methods in our methods course, to cite a few: the Grammar Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, Total Physical Response and so on" (May 4, 2009).

Referring to the privilege of being familiar with various teaching methods to make informed decisions referred to by Atusa and Nasim, Larsen-Freeman (1999) argued that with the knowledge of different methods, teachers "may be able to make

choices that are informed, not conditioned," (p.3) since "teaching is more than following a recipe" (p.4). Larsen-Freeman continued by saying that with the knowledge of different methods, teachers "may be able to resist, or at least argue against, the imposition of a particular method by authorities or outside experts" (p.3). As Larsen-Freeman (2000) argued, having knowledge of methods is "part of the knowledge base of teaching. With it, teachers join a community of practice (Freeman, 1992)" (p.ix) (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991).

According to the sociocultural theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) learning is a situated social practice which involves mediation, discourse and participation structure. As a community member, one needs to learn the professional discourse that community members use so that professional dialogue can happen. In the data, professional discourse referred to the knowledge of the methods in terms of labels such as the Grammar Translation, Audio-lingual Method and so on.

As the data suggested, no matter when and where the high school English teachers had graduated, the majority of the participants were introduced to "all of the language teaching methods" presented in their textbooks, as they mentioned. The recurrent phrase "All the methods" mentioned by the participants referred to the specific and fixed sets of methods which were deemed to constitute the knowledge of the methods and came from the textbooks, such as Larsen Freeman's and Richards and Rodgers's books and once the teachers covered these methods, they were all right. In fact, the teachers' knowledge of the methods was limited to what they had read about them in the textbooks and how these methods were characterized and framed in those textbooks.

The three interviewed EFL methods course lecturers also mentioned that they would teach "all the methods and approaches" presented in the EFL methodology reference books, such as Brown (1994), Celce-Murcia (1991), Chastain (1988), Finocchiaro and Bonoma (1973), Larsen-Freeman (2000), and Richards and Rodgers (2001), as a part of course objective and requirement. This concurred with the analysis of the three EFL methods course syllabi (see Appendices N-P) which revealed that building knowledge about the EFL teaching methods and approaches was given as the first course objective.

In addition to the above, five out of eight high school English teachers: Atena, Atusa, Kiyan, Negin and Reza had been introduced to the current trends and approaches in language teaching, such as Content-based, Task-based and Participatory Approaches. In fact, these five participants were those who either had a Masters degree: Negin and Reza, or were graduated newly from university: Atena, Atusa and Negin.

When the researcher explained these approaches by giving some vivid examples for those who were unfamiliar, a majority of the teachers became so interested and mentioned that they would go and study about them and if the school context let them, they would utilize some of these approaches, such as TBLT in their classes. For instance, Nasim noted that, "TBLT seems really interesting to me. However, most of the TBLT activities depend on group or pair work. I am just wondering how it would fit in with large classes and students who are poor in English" (May 4, 2009).

Likewise, Ali noted that, "these approaches appear to be very useful in students' learning. However, we need some inservice courses to provide us with opportunities to

update our knowledge about them as well as the current trends in language teaching, since we didn't study them in our preservice program" (April 30, 2009).

A comparison between those who were introduced to the current trends in EFL teaching methodologies, i.e. the teachers who had Masters degree or were recently graduated and those who were not taught about these trends showed that none of them, except Negin who claimed that she was following CLT, utilized these approaches and methods, as they said. In fact, not being taught about the new approaches and techniques in preservice EFL teacher education program was a reason put forward by the more experienced teachers, such as Nasim, Ali and Simin and not having practical knowledge about them was an excuse given by new graduates as well as Masters degree holders for not utilizing them.

Here, the majority of the teachers reported that few inservice programs for training or retraining in new language teaching trends were available. For instance, only one teacher, i.e. Negin had the opportunity to participate in an inservice program related to language teaching methods and approaches. This finding is in agreement with Li's (1998) findings which indicated that the majority of South Korean English teachers in his study did not have a clear understanding of CLT. They also referred to lack of training as one of the major obstacles they faced in implementing CLT. For instance, Eom-Mi mentioned, "Like many of us, I learned CLT when I was studying at university. But it was taught as a piece of knowledge for us to remember, not to use. I did not practice using it while at university, though I did try it a few times later when I became a teacher". In the same line, Myong-Sook argued, "I learned the term CLT at a teachers' conference. To be honest, I did not quite understand how it works" (quoted in Li, 1998, p.688). According to Li, the lack of systematic teacher education leads to a

"usually fragmented understanding of CLT and made it difficult for the teachers to leave the security of the traditional methods and take the risk of trying new unfamiliar methods" (p.688).

Only those teachers who had Masters, i.e. Nagin and Reza and those who were newly graduated from universities, i.e. Atena, Atusa and Kiyan mentioned that they were familiar with the beyond method era proposed by Richards (1990) or postmethod condition suggested by Kumaravadivelu (1994), since these issues were covered in their textbooks.

For instance, Atena maintained that, "by reading Richards and Rodgers's (2001) work, we got an idea about the postmethod era; however, it was theoretical" (May 9, 2009). Consequently, the reason behind the unfamiliarity of the other teachers was that in their reference books compiled between the years 1973-1994, as examined by the researcher, no trace of these two trends could be found. Furthermore, as they argued there has been no inservice opportunity for most of them to update their knowledge about the current teaching methodologies.

As the data revealed, the teachers' professional knowledge was constructed differently for three groups of teachers. In other words, in terms of knowledge base, there seemed to be three groups of teachers: those who graduated sometime between seven and fifteen years ago and relied more on the traditional language teaching methods that were introduced in the EFL methods course, and those who had recently graduated or held Masters degrees, who were aware of the new trends in teaching methodology. As it was mentioned in the description of the participants in chapter three,

there was no opportunity for the first group in terms of inservice courses to upgrade their knowledge about the current approaches and methods in language teaching.

Despite the seven EFL teachers who mentioned that they were taught the majority of the language teaching methods presented in the textbooks, Simin who was a graduate from one of the prestigious universities was surprised when the researcher asked her to talk about the language teaching methods she was taught during her preservice EFL teacher education. In fact, the names of the methods were quite strange for her. The researcher then asked her to explain more about her EFL methods course. From what she described, the researcher understood that in her methods course, some general principles and guidelines about teaching had been covered and the course content had not been specifically related to the methods and techniques of language teaching or teaching the language skills.

Simin explained that she was following her Reading course instructor's approach, in her own classes without identifying any name for that approach. She noted, "I liked my instructor's approach very much and now I am following the same trend in my classes" (May 6, 2009). Then, the researcher asked her to describe her instructor's approach. From what she described, the researcher understood that her instructor in the reading course seemed to follow a combination of the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-lingual Method, with more reliance upon the first one. Almost the same approach was observed to be followed by Simin in her actual classes (see pages 164-166 for a description of Simin's classroom practices).

From what Simin mentioned, it could be understood that she had acquired experiential knowledge about the language teaching methods. In fact, she was imitating

and modeling what her instructor was doing in terms of language teaching methods. The idea of imitating is incorporated in Wallace's (1991) craft or apprenticeship model in which trainee teachers' professional competence is developed through study with an experienced practitioner by imitating the expert's demonstration and by following the expert's instruction. According to Barduhn and Johnson (in press), "in this model all of the expertise of teaching resides in the training, and it is the trainee's job to imitate the trainer."

Reference books for the EFL methods course. Similarity was found between the names and contents of the reference books taught in the EFL methods courses. During the interviews, it was revealed that the reference books had been almost similar for several participants, both juniors and seniors, and each of the interviewees had at least studied three or four textbooks for the EFL methods course.

This similarity may refer to a strong sense of convergence about what constitutes the knowledge base for the EFL methods course in preservice EFL teacher education programs across the country. It should be mentioned that the interviewees were asked to either remember or bring along their reference books for the EFL methods course for the interview session.

Negin and Reza were taught Larsen-Freeman's (2000), Richards and Rodgers's (2001) and Chastain's (1988) books in their undergraduate program. Negin noted that they studied some parts of Celce-Murcia' (1991) work related to the teaching of four language skills (April 29, 2009). Reza also mentioned that his instructor had taught some parts of Brown's (1994) book; however, he couldn't remember which parts (May 3, 2009). Negin and Reza also mentioned that the journal articles had been their

references for the EFL methods course in postgraduate program and that they didn't study any specific reference book for that course. According to Negin, these articles were mostly related to some approaches in teaching, such as Communicative Language Teaching, Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Learning, Task-based, Content-based, Participatory Approaches and so on. Negin maintained that they used to read the articles in advance and then come to the class and discuss about them (April 29, 2009). Reza also pointed out that the current trends in language teaching had only been covered in his Masters methods course (May 3, 2009).

Atena, Atusa and Kiyan mentioned that they studied Larsen-Freeman's (2000), Richards and Rodgers's (2001), Chastain's (1988) as well as some parts of Celce-Murcia' (1991) works pertaining to teaching the four language skills. Larsen-Freeman's (1986), Richards and Rodgers's (1986) and Celce-Murcia's (1991) books had been the reference books for Nasim (May 4, 2009) (see Table 4.5). Description of the content of the above-mentioned reference textbooks was presented earlier in this chapter in the analysis of the EFL method course syllabi (see pages 100-102).

Table 4.5

Reference Books Used for the EFL Methods Course Referred to by High School English Teachers

No.	Book Title	Participant
1	Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Regents.	Reza
2	Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.	Nasim Negin Atena Atusa Kiyan
3	Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory and Practice*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich.	Negin Reza Atena Atusa Kiyan
4	Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	Nasim
5	Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	Negin Reza Atena Atusa Kiyan
6	Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	Nasim
7	Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	Negin Reza Atena Atusa Kiyan
8	Other sources (including handouts and pamphlets or Persian textbooks)	Ali Simin

Ali explained that they were given some pamphlets and handouts for the EFL methods course comprising of all the language teaching methods and approaches along with their advantages and disadvantages as well as some book chapters pertaining to teaching the language skills. However, he stipulated that he had lost his pamphlets and

references and as a result, he didn't bring along any reference materials during the interview time. The knowledge of teaching the language skills for Ali was also confined to reading references and did not bear any practical aspects, as he maintained (April 30, 2009).

Simin noted that they were taught from a teaching methodology book written in the Persian language, but she couldn't remember its name and author and therefore she didn't bring along any reference book for the interview session (May 6, 2009).

The examination of the content of the reference books revealed that in Larsen-Freeman's (2000) and Richards and Rodgers's (2001) works, particular language teaching methodologies were almost exclusively dealt with, which is highly in congruence with the first objective of the collected EFL methods course syllabi, while the other books were mainly about the theory and practice of language learning, approaches to teaching the four language skills, and specific methodologies, which are in accordance with the first and second objectives mentioned in the collected syllabi.

Similarities were found in terms of content and name, between what the English teachers mentioned as their reference books (see Table 4.5), and what the EFL methods course lecturers referred to as their reference books used for teaching the EFL methods course. For instance, Milad enumerated Chastain's (1988), Brown's (1994), Larsen-Freeman's (2000) and Richards and Rodgers's (2001) works as his reference books (June 10, 2009). Finocchiaro and Bonoma's (1973), Celce-Murcia's (1991), Larsen-Freeman's (2000) and Richards and Rodgers's (2001) books were reported to be Alireza's source books for the EFL methods course (June 15, 2009). Hamed's reference

books were Chastain (1988), Celce-Murcia (1991), Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Richards and Rodgers (2001) (July 2, 2009).

Similar references were found in the collected syllabi as well. This similarity may arise from following a top-down policy which controls the knowledge base of the EFL methods course in preservice EFL teacher education programs in Iran. In the following table, the list of the required reading resources for the EFL methods course, as given in the collected course syllabi (A, B and C) is presented.

At least, three reference materials were referred to as required in each syllabus examined. Syllabi (B) and (C) included some recommended texts as well (see Table 4.6). As Grosse (1991) argued, "the fact that a course pack of readings is the most frequently used instructional material indicates a general feeling that existing texts are inadequate in some ways" (p.39). Examination of the objectives of the collected EFL methods course syllabi (see Appendices N-P) showed strong similarities between the course objectives and the content of the six frequently required books.

Table 4.6

Required and Recommended Course Readings for the EFL Methods Course Given in the Collected Syllabi

No.	Book Title	Syllabi
1	Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Regents.	A (Required) C (Recommended) B (Recommended)
2	Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.	A (Required) B (Required) C (Required)
3	Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory and Practice*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich.	B (Required) C (Required)
4	Finocchiaro, M. & Bonoma, M. (1973). *The Foreign Language Learner: A Guide for Teachers*. New York: Regents Publication.	B (Recommended)
5	Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.	B (Required) C (Required)
6	Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	A (Required) B (Required) C (Required)

As it could be understood from the table, in each syllabus examined, at least one book exclusively related to the characteristics of language teaching methods and approaches (e.g., Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and two books concerning the theories of language learning and approaches to teaching the language skills (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1991) were required as course readings. Although this finding indicated that apparently more weight should have been given to the practical aspects of teaching methodology, the results of interviews with high school English teachers revealed that the theoretical aspects of EFL methodology, such as introducing the student teachers to EFL teaching methods and approaches had been practically at the center of attention in the EFL methods course.

For instance, Atena commented on the textbooks used in her methods course and said, "These books were really useful to us. In fact, they provided us with a detailed picture of the theoretical tenets of the language teaching methods." She added, "Regarding the language skills, we didn't do much. We used to read about each skill in the class and just highlight the important techniques and methods for teaching that specific skill" (May 9, 2009). In fact, as Atena asserted, knowing about the methods and techniques of teaching the four language skills had been limited to reading the textbooks and memorizing the strategies and techniques.

Other participants also raised the same issue regarding the teaching of language skills in their methods course. For instance, Ali noted that, "we were required to name and define the techniques and methods of teaching the four language skills. That was all we were supposed to learn about teaching the language skills" (April 30, 2009). The patterns of assessment in the collected EFL methods course syllabi also confirmed that the theoretical aspect of the EFL teaching methodology received more attention in the EFL methods course (see Table 4.4). It is worthy to note that the academic system of grading in Iran is based on a 0-20 scale.

With reference to Table 4.4, final examination had a weight higher than all the other components and if one adds midterm examination to it as well, it will be even higher. In fact, midterm and final examinations which are highly related to assessing the content knowledge of students regarding the EFL teaching methodology were bearing more marks in comparison to microteaching which focuses on pedagogical and practical knowledge.

Therefore, as it could be concluded from the data, the practical knowledge of the student teachers was not given its due consideration in the collected syllabi of the EFL methods course. This finding confirmed the interview result in which the high school English teachers were complaining that the EFL methods course had helped them develop their theoretical knowledge about the EFL teaching methodology more.

Little emphasis on the utilization of any of the language teaching methods was reported in the interviews. When the researcher asked if there was any emphasis from the side of the instructors on the advantage of utilizing any of the language teaching methods by the student teachers in their future classes, most of teachers mentioned that there was no special emphasis.

For instance, Reza who had a Masters degree noted that, "in both undergraduate and graduate programs, we were required to learn whatever was written in the textbooks and journal articles about the characteristics of methods without considering any priority for any of them over the others" (May 3, 2009).

As the data suggested, the student teachers were supposed to read about a set of methods which constituted the knowledge base for the EFL methods course and once they had covered those fixed methods, it meant that they were fine. That might be the reason why there had been no emphasis on the utilization of any of the methods. Providing the student teachers with the knowledge of the all methods and letting them decide their teaching methods in their future classes, based on the specific context were reflected in Luo's (2003) study as well. In Luo's research, the teacher educators maintained that they teach their students "some principles they can follow" (p.71). However, they admitted that those principles could not be applied in all classrooms,

since "each classroom is an individual case and the students should know how to adapt those principles to different classes" (p.71).

Unlike the other teachers who mentioned that they were taught all the methods given in the textbooks, pamphlets and handouts without any emphasis on the utility and advantage of any of them, Negin mentioned that Grammar Translation Method was emphasized and preferred by the methods course instructor even for teaching the other methods during her undergraduate program. The following is an excerpt of her interview:

> Our lecturer used to ask the students to come to the class prepared for the lesson of the day … let's say … one of the teaching methods, by looking up the meaning of the unfamiliar words and memorizing them. Then, he would ask one of the volunteers to read what was written about one of the methods in the methodology book aloud. If that person was prepared enough, he/she would paraphrase or summarize the texts in English. If not, the lecturer would ask him/her or some other students to translate the texts into Persian. Afterwards, the instructor would complete the task and present the final remarks (April 29, 2009).

To the researcher, selecting the Grammar Translation Method as a medium for instructing the other methods would induce the student teachers to choose this method for teaching the language learners in their future classes; if they were not exposed to any other instructional approach.

The researcher then asked her what the case was for the methods course in her graduate program. Negin mentioned that in that course they used to read and discuss about some journal articles about the new trends in language teaching without any emphasis on the advantage of utilizing any of them. However, she maintained that she personally favored the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. According

to her, CLT was very lively and encouraged the spirit of teamwork in the students (April 29, 2009).

Practical aspects of the EFL methods course. A detailed account of the interview findings related to the second theme, i.e. "practical aspect of the EFL methods course" is presented as follows.

Decontextualization of the language teaching methods. Although the eight EFL high school teachers graduated from different universities across the country, the instructors' approach was reported to be almost similar in introducing the EFL teaching methodology in the EFL methods course. That is to say, seven out of eight participants mentioned that the language teaching methods had not been contextualized by their instructors or their fellow student teachers. As an example, Kiyan with two years of teaching experience who had graduated from one of the prestigious universities noted that,

> ...we were taught all the language teaching methods in their theoretical forms. If you ask me if we had practiced them, I should tell you not. Neither the instructor nor the student teachers put the methods into practice (May 16, 2009).

Referring to the decontextualization of language teaching methods, Reza, a Masters graduate from one of the universities in the capital with three years of experience commented,

> The EFL teaching methods were not contextualized. Unfortunately, ... in my opinion, ... it seemed that the instructors themselves had difficulties in putting those methods into practice. Then, what do you expect from the student teachers? (May 3, 2009).

Similarly, Nasim with over 15 years of teaching experience mentioned that she had not been confident of her ability of applying theory to practice. She argued that,

> ...We were required to memorize the characteristics of all of the methods presented in our reference books for the EFL methods course. You know... as I perceived, to know is one thing and to practice is totally another thing. In my case, I didn't practice the EFL teaching methods in my methods course or elsewhere and that's why I had some difficulties in my actual classes. …. So, the first day I entered the classroom as a high school English teacher was in fact my first experience and it was such a mess (May 4, 2009).

Likewise, Ali who had graduated from one of the teacher training universities commented that no link has been made between theory and practice regarding the language teaching methods in his EFL methods course by mentioning that:

> None of the EFL teaching methods were contextualized. You know... we were more concerned about the characteristics of each method presented in class, without having any grasp of why that method was important for us to know or how that method was related to our future teaching practice. Getting good grade was our only concern. Apparently, the instructors were not against our approach; otherwise, they would have shown their disagreement and concern. So, to us, it seemed like we were on the right track (April 30, 2009).

Referring to sociocultural theory of situated learning proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) Johnson (1996) argued that,

> Teacher educators must find ways to situate learning about teaching within authentic contexts and develop in teachers ways of knowing and doing that represent the socially constructed, perceptual, and interpretative nature of real teaching. If teacher educators do this, teachers will be constantly engaged in a process of sense-making, enabling them to not simply change what they do, but change their justifications for what they do. Such sense-making makes theory relevant for practice because teachers' knowledge, whether theoretical or practical, conceptual or perceptual, will be understood and acted on within the context of real teaching.

As the data suggested, the teachers were struggling with studying every method in theory, which according to them was considered impractical and irrelevant to actual teaching in high school English classrooms. In fact, creating a link between theory and practice which was valued by the majority of EFL teachers in this study had been almost overlooked in the EFL methods course held in the universities from which the participants of this study had graduated from; an issue which needs serious consideration.

The gap between theory and practice (e.g., the relation between knowing terminologies and teaching in actual classrooms, the connection between knowing theories and engaging in professional discourse, etc) which was addressed in this study was reflected in Luo's (2003) study of one EFL pre-service program in Taiwan as well. In her research, the practicing and preservice teachers perceived a gap between theory and practice in teacher education programs and were not even certain about the role of formal preservice education in their learning to teach. According to Hanley (1993), there are three conditions that must be met in methods classes:

> 1) The methods class must deliver a theoretical base and practical skills, 2) pre-service teachers must examine their own assumptions and predispositions in such a way that theory and practice become integrated, and 3) methods instructors must constantly monitor their teaching so that they are providing practical advice. (p. 11)

According to Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000), great numbers of preservice teachers are not successful in creating links between the theory and how to put it into practice. They accentuate what they refer to as "contextualized" teaching as essential to help students fill in the gap between theory and practice. "Teaching in ways that are responsive to students requires that teachers be able to engage in systematic learning

from teaching contexts as well as from more generalized theory about teaching and learning" (Quoted in Hartman, 2003, p.524).

The decontextualization of theory and practice is also addressed by Korthagen et al. (2006) where they maintained that, traditionally, teacher education has been "characterized by a strong emphasis on theory that is transferred to teachers in the form of lectures" (p.1021). As they argued,

> the knowledge-transmission view of teacher education has been under consistent scrutiny for its many problems and limitations due to the fact that the knowledge base of university-based teacher education is incapable of filling the gap between 'theory' as it is treated in teacher education programs and the knowledge and skills of experienced teachers or their 'competency' at schools (Korthagen et al., 2006, p.1021).

Among the eight participants of the study, only Atusa mentioned that her instructor in the EFL methods course had tried to contextualize the language teaching methods. She noted that,

> When our lecturer was teaching a method, he was asking one of the volunteer student teachers to come to the board and teach a short text implementing that specific method, while he himself was helping him or her out. Then, he would discuss about the weak and strong points of that method, which to me sounded very useful. In my opinion, observing each of the language teaching methods in practice would help the student teachers to choose their teaching approach more consciously and wisely, later in their real classes (May 5, 2009).

Being loaded with theoretical knowledge and being passive receivers of information in the EFL methods class was corroborated by comments from Kiyan who had graduated from one of the prestigious universities,

Unfortunately, our instructor followed the traditional transmission approach. We were taught almost all of the language teaching methods. However, what were the benefits of them? We were more concerned about the products of learning and thought little about the process of learning. We had to go to the class, sit down, pull out our notebooks and pens and take notes about the characteristics of each method during the session. ... In my opinion ... you know... student teachers expect to leave preservice EFL teacher education programs with the knowledge and skills to enable them to work with English language learners in whatever setting they are in. However, in our case, we were loaded with theories (May 16, 2009).

Nasim and Simin also put forward that they were loaded with theoretical knowledge and that they were almost devoid of pedagogical and practical knowledge. For instance Simin noted that, "…we left preservice EFL teacher education program with theoretical knowledge loads. You know... we were good listeners, receivers of information" (May 6, 2009). In the same line, Nasim argued that,

I had brought to the class a load of theories and methods. But, what could I do with those fabulous, fantastic theories and methods? You know, I mean things in the books and things in the class do not necessarily match. Principles and guidelines about EFL teaching methods which sound nice on paper may not work in the classroom (May 4, 2009).

From Nasim's tone of voice, the researcher perceived that she was mocking the profusion of methods and theories which according to her had not been contextualized by using some words, such as fabulous and fantastic ironically. She also expressed the influence of being unprepared for the real classroom on her personal life by mentioning that:

… I remember my first day at school well. I was so nervous in all my classes. I had a superficial smile on my lips. But, deep in my heart, it was turmoil. I got back home with a severe headache. You know why? Because I didn't have any prior experience. I was not competent enough to stand alone in my class and translate those splendid theories and methods, already engraved in my mind, into practice (May 4, 2009).

As it could be inferred from the data, the EFL teachers were not satisfied with the overload of theoretical knowledge. They mentioned that although they knew the characteristics of each method, since they didn't have any prior experience of putting that method into practice, they didn't feel competent enough to use it when they started their teaching profession.

This finding corroborates with the ideas of several educators (Denmark & Nelli, 1980; Cross, 1995) who claim that effective teacher training programs are those which are relevant to the current movements in education and social demand. These educators accentuate that preservice EFL teacher education should prepare teachers for the real world teaching practices. If the program is far from providing this opportunity to prospective teachers then graduating students might not teach successfully. According to Johnson (1997), "theory can and will transform practice, but only if teachers have multiple and varied opportunities to make sense of theory within the familiar context of their own teaching and learning experiences" (p.779).

As Namaghi (2010) asserted, teacher education programs may incorrectly suppose that content knowledge can be used in practice, once developed. However, he brings some studies carried out by Sakui (2004), Carless (2003), Myhill (2003) and Korthagen and Lagerwerf (1996) as examples to show that "knowledge transfer is not as simple or unproblematic as assumed by educators" (p.215). For instance, in Sakui's (2004) study, despite having solid knowledge in CLT, the teachers could only talk about it rather than apply it. In Carless's (2003) research, although the teachers had the knowledge of TBLT, they did not use it due to the contextual factors (cited in Namaghi, 2010). In fact, the same thing happened to the participants of this study. Although they

had content knowledge about different teaching methods, lack of pedagogical knowledge and experience inhibited them from utilizing them.

Two EFL methods course lecturers also confirmed that they were teaching the EFL methods course theoretically and rarely creating links between theory and practice. For instance, Hamed said, "I am forced to teach in theory to cover the syllabi. There is no room for practice in my class" (July 2, 2009).

The term "forced" here referred to the requirement imposed on the instructor by the syllabi. In fact, it was the syllabi which controlled knowledge in the methods course rather than the lecturer; and the quantity as well as quality control was carried out by the institutions under which the lecturer was working. Similarly, Alireza noted that,

> We are powerful in theoretical studies, but poor in practical teaching. To me, the context of the course should resemble a collaborative workshop which accommodates all fresh ideas as to content and processes of the course. This is what I believe reflective teacher training/education is. However, the rigidity and pre-packagedness of the course does not allow me to contextualize the things. (June 15, 2009).

However, Milad who had more years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course, i.e. ten years, noted that, "Although I do not contextualize all the methods and techniques due to the shortage of time, by displaying some videos I try to make the abstract concepts somehow concrete for my student teachers" (June 10, 2009). Therefore, Milad who was more experienced took a different stand in presenting the language teaching approaches and methods, meaning that he was trying to contextualize the approaches, methods and techniques by displaying some video segments.

Since the participants were complaining about the decontextualization of language teaching methods, the researcher asked them if they had performed microteaching, which is considered as one of the main components of the EFL methods course syllabi. Three out of eight teachers, i.e. Atena, Atusa and Negin mentioned that they had to prepare themselves for microteaching in the EFL methods course. They mentioned that they were supposed to teach a lesson in 10-20 minutes, that it was upon them to choose their text and method of teaching and that it happened only once during the whole semester. As an example, Negin noted that,

> Only once, the student teachers had the opportunity to choose one of the readings of high school English textbooks arbitrarily. With the presence of the other student teachers as well as the instructor, that student teacher would enter the classroom pretending that he/she was in the real context and the rest were his/her high school students and taught that specific unit. The students were free in terms of selecting their teaching method (April 29, 2009).

Negin added that even that limited experience had been very useful for her. She said,

> While I was observing my fellow student teachers teaching, I was imagining myself as a student. Then, I could better understand how the students would feel while learning English. This kind of experience helped me a lot when I started my teaching profession (April 29, 2009).

In fact, microteaching which is a "scaled-down version of the real world" has one basic assumption that "practice in this scaled-down situation" (Seidman, 1968, p.47) will have useful effects when the student teacher meets his or her own class of thirty or more students for 90 minutes. Legutke and Schocker-v. Ditfurth (2009) and Wabha (1999) believed that with emphasis on a teach, review and reflect, and re-teach approach, microteaching sessions raised student teachers' awareness of knowing and

doing, increased the understanding of students as learners, and taught observation and feedback skills.

According to Wallestad (2009), the student teachers would learn in microteaching how it would feel to consider themselves as being an ESL or EFL student, which would help them to realize how their future students might feel when they are learning a second and/or foreign language. According to her,

> Being a teacher, an ESL/EFL learner, and an observer during each microteaching presentation is helpful for all the students to gain analytical views as well as pedagogical and practical knowledge of teaching and learning through experience. This is one of the ways all the students would cooperate with one another to scaffold their pedagogical knowledge and practical knowledge together as one big community (Wallestad, 2009, p.114).

The researcher then asked the three EFL teachers what method or approach they chose for teaching their lesson during microteaching. Atusa mentioned that she has been eclectic while she was doing her microteaching. According to her, "a teacher should be able to understand what subject could be taught with what method and technique and in what context" (May 5, 2009).

Atena noted that she taught as she was taught and said, "I liked my third-grade high school English teacher's way of teaching very much. Therefore, in my microteaching I chose that one" (May 9, 2009). Reverting to the school day models was also reported in Johnson's (1994) study of four pre-service student teachers on an MA program in the USA. In her study, the trainees appeared to understand the limitations of the teacher-centered didactic models learnt during their school days; however, when on teaching practice, they followed their school day models. They were not able to change

because of a lack of available alternative models. For instance, one student teacher recorded in her journal:

> It's been really frustrating to watch myself do the old behaviors and not know how to "fix it" at the time. I now know that I don't want to teach like this, I don't want to be this kind of teacher, but I don't have any other experiences. It's like I just fall into the trap of teaching like I was taught and I don't know how to get myself out of that model. I think I still need more role models of how to do this, but it's up to me to really strive to apply what I believe in when I'm actually teaching (quoted in Johnson, 1994, p.446).

Different studies on learning-to-teach (Johnson, 1994; Kennedy, 1998; Legutke and Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009) have revealed that student teachers initiate their education with images of teaching that they have acquired during their own (language) learning experience as students. According to Farrell (2009), this apprenticeship forms both student-teachers' views on what they believe to be appropriate teaching and their disposition to act in the classroom without considering whatever they may have learned from studying the relevant disciplinary knowledge.

As Kennedy (1997) maintained, unless student teachers encounter practice situations that enable them to experience convincing alternative practices and experiment with new ideas, these imprints are very resistant to change. The same is true for practicing teachers who may find readings on new approaches to teaching convincing, concerning their theoretical rationale, but not credible because they cannot imagine how to put them into practice.

As Atena was describing her teaching approach during her microteaching, the researcher understood that her method of teaching had been a combination of some of

the techniques of the Grammar Translation and the Audio-lingual Methods with heavy reliance upon the first one (May 9, 2009).

Negin maintained that, "most of the student teachers in our class chose the Grammar Translation Method for teaching their lesson including me" (April 29, 2009). Afterwards, the researcher inquired why she had selected that method, she continued,

> We were not willing to choose any other method except the Grammar Translation Method, since we were not trained enough practically to implement them. So we used to choose the easiest one, I mean the Grammar Translation Method which was familiar for almost all of us. You may want to know why I called it easy and familiar. Since, it was the method we were taught most (April 29, 2009).

Although the three EFL teachers, who had experienced microteaching, found it very useful, they complained that their instructors didn't provide them with any constructive feedback to know their weaknesses and only a score out of 20 given to them by their instructors was a criterion for them to know their success or failure in microteaching. For instance, Atusa noted that, "my mark in microteaching was 18. Then, what my problem was in teaching, I didn't know" (May 5, 2009).

Five out of eight teachers, i.e. Ali, Kiyan, Nasim, Reza and Simin maintained that their methods class time was mostly spent on dealing with theories and methods of learning and teaching English and there was no room for any form of practice including microteaching. In other words, the methods class, as they argued, was education-ridden, while the participants asserted that it should be practical. For instance, Nasim noted that,

> The instructors were more concerned about introducing us to the methods and theories. May be they were thinking if we knew them, we would put them into practice in their appropriate position in our real classrooms; an idea which seemed to me not true. To me ... if you

don't have any idea about how to practically use them, you won't implement them (May 4, 2009).

One of the main components of the sociocultural theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is the social participation structures which include both the discourse and activities and affect how meaning is made and knowledge is constructed (Wenger, 1998). Although the EFL methods course was effective in providing the teachers with the professional discourse which was the knowledge of language teaching methods, it was not efficient enough in giving the teachers the opportunity to engage in activities. In fact, the elements of social participation and involvement in activities which are prerequisite for learning had been absent in the EFL methods course.

As Singh and Richards (2009) argued, negotiation of meaning, knowledge, and understanding are very important in a community of practice and the EFL methods course should grant a primary place for the social activities to be engaged in. According to Singh and Richards, teacher's learning on language teacher education courses "involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher" (p.203). In this study, the student teachers acquired the professional discourse, but they were not able to develop their own theory of pedagogy.

While all of the three EFL methods course lecturers affirmed the beneficial role of microteaching, they also maintained that the duration of the course, four hours per week for the period of sixteen weeks, was not long enough to provide all the student teachers with opportunity to do microteaching, particularly when there were a large number of students in one class.

As an example Milad noted that, "whenever time and class size are not constraints, I ask all of my student teachers to do microteaching" (June 10, 2009). Here, as the lecturers argued the populous classes with thirty to forty students inside, the limited number of sessions, sixteen four-hour sessions, and the pressure of covering the syllabi did not allow them to deal extensively with the pedagogical and practical aspects of EFL teaching methodology and subsequently to give all the student teachers the chance to do microteaching.

Referring to the institutional and time constraints as well as prepackaged courses as hindering factors in performing methods course lecturers' desired activities, Milad with ten years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course noted that,

> You know....we are always pressed for covering the pre-packaged syllabi and contents. I am personally interested in task-based and participatory approaches; however, the large sizes of classes as well as the time and syllabi constraints do not let me follow what I want (June 10, 2009).

Referring to the same problem, i.e. the institutional constraints, Alireza with eight years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course asserted, "I myself am interested in those methods which require the student teachers to actively engage in class activities and solve problems or explore. However, I need to fulfill the syllabi" (June 15, 2009).

These findings which affirm the lecturers' preference towards more learner-centered approaches in teaching the EFL methods course is congruent with the increasing body of research (e.g. Richards, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 1998; Nunan, 1988) which supports the move from a teacher-centered to a more learner-centered methodology. However, as the data revealed, the lecturers in this study like many other

EFL lecturers across the country follow the old lecturer-centered approach in teaching the EFL methods course. Even if the instructors were willing to incorporate the learner-centered approach into their teaching, as they mentioned, their attempts were restricted by the class size and other environmental and institutional factors.

The researcher then asked if the high school English teachers had practiced some of the language teaching methods in their practicum. Although the majority of the EFL teachers believed in the assisting role of practicum in teachers' learning to teach, only one out of the eight high school English teachers, namely Ali had gone to a school and had experienced the real situation of the classroom for his practicum, prior to starting his profession as a high school English teacher. It is worthy to note that, Ali had an Associate degree in ELT before receiving his ELT Bachelors degree and in fact, practicum, in the form of going to school, was a part of his ELT Associate degree curriculum.

As Ali mentioned, the student teachers in their second year of Associate degree were required to go to high schools once a week, for their practicum for the period of sixteen weeks. They were supposed to teach or do the exercises instead of the class teacher. The researcher then asked him what they did during their practicum. Ali noted that, "The student teachers used to observe the teacher of the class first and then imitate his or her method of teaching when it was their turn" (April 30, 2009).

As he argued, even in their practicum they were not willing to use a different approach. When the researcher asked why, he mentioned that, "By imitating the school teacher, we were on the safe side. No one could blame us because of our approach; since we were following what the school teacher was practicing" (April 30, 2009).

Negin, Nasim, Simin and Atena who also majored in ELT maintained that they had six credit hours of practicum (See Appendix J). However, the course was conducted in the form of microteaching in front of their peers and instructors and they were not required to go to schools to observe or teach in the real contexts. According to them, the student teachers were supposed to choose a lesson from the high school English textbooks or any other English texts arbitrarily and it was upon the student teacher to select his or her teaching method. As they mentioned, there had been no emphasis from the side of the instructor on the utility of any of the teaching methods. These teachers mentioned that since they did not have any prior experience of putting the language teaching methods into practice in their EFL methods course, they were either eclectic or followed the approach of their own English teachers at high schools in their practicum.

As Johnson (1994) noted, preservice teachers have spent more time in classrooms as students than as student teachers, and these past experiences may have more impact on how information on teaching is translated into classroom practices during the practicum than what they have been exposed to in the language teacher education program. Since preservice teachers may not be aware of the impact of their past experience as students on their teaching during the practicum, Bailey et al. (1996, p.11) proposed that teacher education programs should comprise activities that encouraged them to bring their "past experience to the level of conscious awareness" so that it can be analyzed (quoted in Farrell, 2007, p.193).

Kiyan, Atusa and Reza who majored in ELL, ELL and ET respectively mentioned that practicum was not a part of their Bachelors curriculum, as it could be observed in Appendices K and L. However, they argued that in their one-year pre-employment training program, they had fifty one hours of practicum which included

two parts. In the first part, the student teachers were required to prepare a lesson plan and teach an English lesson accordingly in 10 to 20 minutes. They argued that the selection of the lesson as well as the method of teaching had been optional. The second part involved going to schools. These three teachers mentioned that they were merely observers in the classes and were not involved in the teaching action.

The systematic integration of school-based experience is among the disciplinary challenges of L2 teacher education programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels in many countries, such as Iran. Although it has received much attention since the 1990s, and although it is claimed to be an essential part of many programs, current practice often lacks consistent and convincing models; school-based experience, not only seems to be incompatible with academic curricula, but also appears difficult to implement because of institutional constraints and cross-institutional incompatibility (Legutke & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009).

As Darling-Hammond (1998) argued, the practicum experience establishes the base for preservice teacher education. The link between theory and practice combined with the kind of learning opportunities that should occur for preservice teachers to be successful in the classroom must happen in the classroom setting. Practicum provides student teachers with supervised experiences and helps them understand the full scope of teachers' role. These experiences are very powerful in shaping preservice teachers as they are real in comparison with the artificial environment of the university courses (Tuli & File, 2009).

Experiencing the intricacies in the classroom in person provides a clearer understanding of the challenges facing teachers every day (Hartman, 2003). According

to Zeichner (1996), practicum is a site where student teachers practice the art of teaching in real school context with student teachers assigned to one teacher and class for a specific block of time. As Groundwater-Smith (1996) mentioned, practicum allows student teachers to examine current work place conditions, internal and external factors affecting current structural or organizational features and the influence of school planning processes on classroom practices in relation to curriculum, evaluation and pedagogy (cited in Tuli & File, 2009). However, as the data revealed, not enough attention has been paid to the practicum component of the preservice EFL teacher education which could actually serve as a link between theory and practice.

Summary of the findings for research question one. Considering the theoretical aspects of the EFL methods course, the majority of high school English teachers were taught "all the language teaching methods" presented in the reference books, such as Brown (1994), Celce-Murcia (1991), Chastain (1988), Larsen-Freeman (1986; 2000), and Richards and Rodgers (1986; 2001), as a requirement for the EFL methods course. Many of the teachers mentioned that all the language teaching methods and approaches had been treated similarly, meaning that there had been no emphasis from the instructors' side on the utility of any of them.

Focusing on the practical aspects of the EFL methods course, most of the participants mentioned that the language teaching methods and approaches had not been contextualized in their EFL methods course, and hardly any link had been made between theory and practice. Almost all of the participants believed that they had been passive receivers of information and their EFL methods course was more theory-loaded. Therefore, as the data revealed the EFL methods course is treated more as a theoretical course rather than a pedagogical course in the preservice EFL teacher education

institutions under study. A small number of teachers had performed microteaching in the EFL methods course and only four participants had observed and experienced the real context of schools through practicum. Practicum, as a part of the Bachelors degree curriculum had been in the form of microteaching for those who were majoring in ELT.

To conclude, the theoretical and the practical aspects of the methods course cannot be separated. Participants reported an over-emphasis on the theoretical and an under-emphasis on the practical aspects of the course. Without adequate practical grounding, students are not able to see the importance of the theory in their actual teaching practices. These emergent issues are discussed at length in the answer to research question two.

Research Question Two

The main purpose of research question two: "How did the EFL methods course contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province?" was to examine how the social context of the EFL methods course contributed to the practices of high school English teachers in the Semnan Province.

This research question is answered with data from interviews with the eight high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers. Questions (10-12) and (6) found in Appendices (B) and (D) provided the interview data for this research question. Different artifacts which were reported to be used in the EFL methods course were also examined.

Findings of the interviews and artifacts. In analyzing the data, four major themes were identified, i.e. "content knowledge", "lecture-centered classes", "situated

social interactions", and "limited artifacts". These themes were selected through a process of coding and categorizing the interview data. Some coding categories were driven by the literature review, such as *"situated social interactions"* (see page 140), while the others, like *"lecturer-centered classes"* (see page 138) emerged from the data as the researcher read through the interview transcripts. The four above mentioned themes looked at different dimensions of the social context of the EFL methods course including content, interaction and artifacts which might have influenced the teachers' classroom practices.

Content knowledge. The first theme which emerged was that the EFL methods course helped develop content knowledge of the high school English teachers. The researcher asked the participants how the content of the EFL methods course had contributed to their practices. All of the participants mentioned that this course had been very beneficial in terms of providing them with content knowledge about the language teaching methods and approaches, but they argued that they needed more practical groundings.

As an example, Kiyan asserted that, "in this subject I became familiar with different theories, principles, and methods of language teaching. However, I needed more and better preparation in terms of pedagogical knowledge, I mean how to put them into practice" (May 16, 2009). Likewise, Nasim asserted that, "we learnt many theories and concepts. However, we were not given enough practical grounding" (May 4, 2009).

In reference to the high school English teachers' preference in acquiring pedagogical knowledge besides the content knowledge, Johnson (2006) argued that, "although it is certainly important for L2 teachers to know about theories of language and SLA, the cumulative effect of studying what language is and how it is acquired may

not necessarily translate into effective L2 teaching practices (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, 2004, 2005; Johnson, 2003)" (p.240). According to her, "instead of arguing over whether or not L2 teachers should study, for example, theories of SLA as part of a professional preparation program, attention may be better focused on creating opportunities for L2 teachers to make sense of those theories in their professional lives and the settings where they work (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; 2004)" (Johnson, 2006, p.240), and this is what was requested by all participating teachers in this study.

For instance, Nasim noted that, "… things in the books and things in the class do not necessarily match. Principles and guidelines about EFL teaching methods which sound nice on paper may not work in the classroom. We need to know how to utilize those methods and theories in our classes" (May 4, 2009).

Lecturer-centered classes. The second theme was related to the lecturer-centered nature of the EFL methods classes. Almost all of the high school English teachers mentioned that their EFL methods class had been mostly lecturer-fronted and lecturer-centered. For instance, Negin who had graduated from a prestigious university noted that her EFL methods course was mainly managed through lecturing and explained that, "We had to listen to the monologue presented by the lecturer. The class was managed mostly through lecturing rather than dialogue" (April 29, 2009).

In fact, Negin considered herself as the consumer of theories and methodologies because she had no chance to express her own ideas. The only thing she could do was to listen to monologues presented by the lecturer. Lack of enough opportunity to engage actively in the community of practice (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991), here in the EFL methods class community of practice, was echoed in Ali's remarks as well,

There was not enough opportunity for us to participate in discussions. We were taught what the instructor thought we needed to know and we would tell them what we had learnt about the methods in the final exams (April 30, 2009).

As the data showed, since the predetermined content was presented didactically by the lecturers, student teachers had no chance to express their thoughts and feelings about the information presented. In fact, the respondents did not take activities designed to facilitate the development of cognitive skills like self-reflection or critical thinking and seemed to just go through the motions to get the mark (Quaintance, 2006).

The issue of teacher-centeredness of the classes is also addressed in Sakamoto's (2004) study of one teacher education program in Japan. In her research, the participants also mentioned that most of their classes were teacher-centered and therefore, they did not have to think, create and do things by themselves.

Lecturer-centered approach is associated mainly with the transmission of knowledge (Brown, 2003). However, as Wenger (1998) maintained, human learning is emergent through social interactions, where context and identity play crucial mediating roles (cited in Singh & Richards, 2006). According to Johnson (2009),

Teacher cognition originates in and is fundamentally shaped by the specific social activities in which teachers engage. Thus, teachers' knowledge and beliefs are constructed through and by the normative ways of thinking, talking, and acting that have been historically and culturally embedded in the communities of practice in which they participate (as both learners and teachers). ....We can trace teacher's learning from a sociocultural perspective by looking at the progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activities to internal mediation controlled by the individual teacher (p.17).

Situated social interactions. The third theme which emerged was the role of situated social interactions with fellow student teachers in teachers' learning. Interaction and collaboration especially with fellow student teachers were mentioned as a source of learning in all the interviews. For instance, Nasim asserted that,

> The instructors teach you something. You go back home and think about it. Then you come back again and talk about it with other student teachers. … I learnt many things necessary for my career from talking and negotiating with them (May 4, 2009).

Referring to the vital role of situated social interactions with fellow student teachers in the process of teachers' learning, Reza maintained that, "At the end of each class I preferred to discuss about the topic of that class with my fellow student teachers. I can claim that I learnt many things and acquired many professional discourses" (May 3, 2009). Here, the professional discourse refers to the methods and techniques of language teaching.

The data indicated that all of the teachers emphasized on the contribution of the interactive aspect of the EFL methods course in their learning. In the same line, Singh and Richards (2006) maintained that, "working collaboratively with peers creates social relationships in the course room, both formal and informal, that condition participants' relative success in learning." According to Johnson (2006), in fact "the knowledge of the individual is constructed through the knowledge of the communities of practice within which the individual participates"(p.237). Likewise, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized on the interrelated roles of the individual and the social world in the development of the individual.

Although the majority of the teachers emphasized on the role of situated social interaction within the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), here, the EFL methods course, as one of the sources of their learning, they mentioned that pair and small group discussions and social interactions especially with the lecturers in many classes were not given enough emphasis in some classes especially if the instructor of the class was aged and highly experienced (Nasim, May 4, 2009). However, they acknowledged the contribution of instructors' knowledge and experience in their learning.

The researcher asked the English teachers if they felt competent enough to put into practice what they had been taught about language teaching methods in their EFL methods course in the real context of their classrooms. The majority of the participants maintained that they were not competent enough to translate into practice those language teaching methods which they had been taught in theory to meet the demands of their real English classrooms. For instance, Atusa, a graduate from a prestigious university mentioned that,

> We are well-aware of our weaknesses. For example, we know we should use CLT, but we do not know how. Moreover, our English level does not fit with the demands of communicative language teaching. To implement this method, we should improve our English first, and this problem cannot be solved instantly (May 5, 2009).

The interviewees mentioned that they had some problems during their early years of teaching and that through the years of teaching experience, trial and error as well as consulting with colleagues and participating in inservice programs, they learnt many things about teaching. For instance, Negin with four years of experience asserted that,

In fact, I learned my things through experience, participating in inservice courses and consulting with my colleagues. The training was good but not enough and practical. The first day I entered my class, I was a bit confused. Let's say ... I was jumping from one part to the other without following any discipline or method. Although I was very motivated for teaching the students, my teaching was not planned and organized. I think my students also had understood about my lack of confidence in teaching (April 29, 2009).

This finding is in agreement with The Carnegie Forum report (1986) on teaching as a profession which found that many teacher education programs "produce graduates who complain that their education courses failed to prepare them for teaching" (p. 71). According to Farrell (2009), novice language teachers confront numerous challenges as they learn how to teach in their first year. Many teacher trainers, student teachers, novice teachers and administrators suppose that "once novice teachers have graduated, they will be able to apply what they have learned in teacher-preparation programs during their first year of teaching." However, "the transition from the teacher-education program to the first year of teaching has been characterized as a type of 'reality shock' (Veenman, 1984, p.143)" (quoted in Farrell, 2009, p.182). Farrell argued that, "the ideas that novice teachers may have formed during the teacher-education program are often replaced by the realities of the social and political contexts of school" (p.182).

According to Richards (2008), the campus-based program (here preservice teacher education) is considered as the first stage of the teacher's professional development, "subsequent learning taking place in the school through classroom experience, working with mentors and other school-based activities" (p.166). According to Richards (2001), "teachers learn to teach by teaching" (p.4). As he argued, creating links between campus-based and school-based learning in language teacher education is problematic and student teachers often discern a gap "between the

theoretical course work offered on campus and the practical school-based component" (Richards, 2008, p.166).

Unfamiliarity with a new context of teaching (Brock and Grady, 1997) and the challenges and difficulties that novice teachers confront during their first year of teaching may create feelings of incompetency or isolation if they are not taken into consideration (Kuzmic, 1993) (cited in Farrell, 2009; p.185). Unfortunately, the limited existing literature proposes that these issues are not sufficiently addressed in language teacher education programs (Farrell, 2009). Farrell suggested two approaches for preparing novice teachers more effectively to face the probable challenges in their first year of teaching: "the introduction of specific courses dedicated to first-year teaching and the development of school-teacher educator partnerships" (p.185).

Limited artifacts. The fourth theme was the limited use of artifacts. Some artifacts such as reference books, educational pamphlets and handouts used in the EFL methods class were reported to play mediating and beneficial roles in teachers' learning. For instance, Kiyan with two years of experience noted that, "the methodology books served as guidebooks for us. Now after some years, I still refer to them, when I have some problems in teaching" (May 3, 2009). The researcher then asked him to name the other artifacts used in his EFL methods course. He asserted that textbooks had been the only artifact. According to him, even the whiteboard was not frequently used; since the instructor used to lecture the whole class (May 3, 2009).

Likewise, Nasim with fifteen years of experience argued that the artifacts in her EFL methods course had been limited only to textbooks. According to her, using videos and other audio-visual artifacts related to teaching methodology might provide the

student teachers with an opportunity to see the things in practice. However, such facilities were not used in her EFL methods class (May 4, 2009).

As the data indicated, there was not any significant difference between the artifacts used in the EFL methods class two years ago and fifteen years ago, meaning that for the majority of teachers, textbooks had been the only artifact used.

Here, the high school English teachers referred to the use of artifacts throughout the preservice EFL teacher education programs. The participants reiterated that the facilities were not enough by any means and the usage of some of them, such as the language laboratory, was only limited to the first two semesters of their study. As an example, Atusa noted that,

> Our access to audio-visual materials such as English movies was only limited to the very first semesters. In my opinion, audio-visual materials provide the learners with the opportunity to be exposed to authentic language. They help the learners to increase their knowledge of the English culture, the lifestyle as well as cultural differences (May 5, 2009).

The interview with the three EFL methods course lecturer also indicated that the use of artifacts was almost limited in their classes. For instance, Hamed with five years of experience in teaching the course asserted that his main artifacts for teaching were the reference books and whiteboard (July 2, 2009). Alireza and Milad with eight and ten years of experience in teaching the EFL methods course respectively mentioned that besides the reference books, they provided the student teachers with some handouts which would give some useful hints regarding language teaching methods and techniques which might not be available in their books. Whiteboards and some PowerPoint slides were the other artifacts the lecturers used to apply.

Milad also mentioned that he tried to display some videos introducing the methods and techniques audio-visually for the pupils if there was time. (June 10, 2009) Thus, it could be inferred that artifacts had more varieties in Alireza and Milad's classes than that of Hamed's.

One of the main components of the sociocultural theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is the role of artifacts in learning. Referring to the mediating role of artifacts in teachers' learning, Singh and Richards (2009) maintained that the role of mediating artifacts including handouts, worksheets, technology, video, as well as the physical course-room layout in constructing new meanings is crucial to the process of teachers' learning. For instance, in the present study, playing a videoed lesson segment by utilizing a specific language teaching method might help raise the awareness of the student teachers about the role of the teacher, learner, turn-taking, corrective feedback and so on in that particular method.

Summary of the findings for research question two. All of the teachers mentioned that the EFL methods course had been beneficial in terms of providing them with more content knowledge. However, they argued that they required better preparation in terms of pedagogical and practical knowledge. They referred to the lecturer-centered nature of the EFL methods course classes and asserted that not much space had been given to group-work and social interactions especially with the lecturers in many classes. However, the majority of the participants acknowledged that the knowledge and experience of their instructors had played a pivotal role in their learning.

Interaction and collaboration with the fellow student teachers were mentioned to be one of the sources of their learning. Some artifacts such as reference books,

educational pamphlets and handouts used in the EFL methods course were reported to play mediating and beneficial roles in teachers' learning; however, they argued that it was not enough and that they needed some audio-visual aids. The majority of the participants believed that they were not competent enough to implement what they learnt in terms of teaching methods in their preservice education in the real context of the classroom. They reported that they had some difficulties especially during the first years of teaching and that through years of teaching experience, trial and error as well as consulting with colleagues and participating in inservice programs, they learnt many things about teaching.

Research Question Three

The main purposes of research question three: "How do high school English teachers in Semnan province, Iran use or adapt the language teaching methods in their classrooms?" were to examine what language teachers "actually did" in their classrooms (Cross, 2006), to observe whether or not they used or adapted any methods in their language classrooms (If the English teachers did not implement methods, what approaches or techniques did they implement in their classroom teaching action and what was the reason behind that implementation?), and to look for the possible sources of discrepancies (if any) between what the teachers said and what they really practiced.

This research question is answered with data from two rounds of interviews (pre and post-observation) with the eight high school English teachers, the classroom observations of the same teachers for three consecutive class periods and the analysis of high school English textbooks. The data came from the interview questions (13-16) and (1-4), found in Appendices (B) and (C) respectively, the examination of observation

field notes (see Appendix T) and the analysis of the Iranian high school English textbooks.

In order to answer research question three, the researcher first discussed the results of interviews (pre-observation) with the high school English teachers, then she presented an analysis of the high school English textbooks followed by the observation data. The findings from the post-observation interviews are displayed last.

Findings of the pre-observation interviews. To examine what language teachers actually did in their classrooms in terms of using or adapting the EFL teaching methods, the researcher firstly interviewed the eight high school English teachers to see what they would say or believed. To begin, the researcher first enumerated the characteristics of each method and then asked them to identify their own teaching method. Three major themes were identified: "being eclectic in teaching", "imposition of methodology by the textbooks", and "following CLT approach". These themes emerged from the data as the researcher read through the interview transcripts. A report on the findings will be presented as follows.

Being eclectic in teaching. The first theme that emerged was that majority of the high school English teachers reported to be eclectic. In describing their teaching methodology, six high school English teachers either explicitly or implicitly mentioned that they were eclectic in selecting their teaching approach. For instance, Ali with nine years of teaching experience said that,

> I try to use a combination of all language teaching methods. Eclectic is the most suitable word that can describe my teaching method. I take a point from one method and a point from another one and combine them all to fit my classroom context (April 30, 2009).

He continued that, "Sticking to just one method is not enough. Every method has its own unique characteristics and merits. We as language teachers should be creative enough to make use of the best features of all methods" (April 30, 2009). Favoring eclecticism, Atena with one year of teaching experience asserted that,

> With so many different methods, it is difficult to decide which method is the best one. In fact, it depends a lot upon your individual circumstances. The personality and English level of the students and their needs will play an important part in your decision. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. That is why we would better adapt an eclectic method (May 9, 2009).

Likewise, referring to the students' needs and English level while adapting the teaching method, Atusa with two years of teaching experience argued that, "I try to pick up the positive points of various methods and approaches, whatever I think would fit my classes" (May 5, 2009).

In line with the idea of making use of the best features of different language teaching methods, Richards and Rogers (2001) maintained that "teachers and teachers in training need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgment and experience," and "they should be encouraged to transform and adapt the methods they use to make them their own" (p.250).

In the same line, Freeman (2002) and Prabhu (1990) believed that methods are not intended to fit every teacher and every classroom, and that teachers should implement the methods that best fit their beliefs and their classroom. According to Grittner (1990),

> No teaching method is suggested for any one teacher, for any one class, or for any one individual. The teacher should be cognizant of current trends and innovative techniques in foreign language methods, and should employ the best methods to achieve the desired goal. (p.39)

Taking the needs of the students into consideration was also incorporated in comments from Reza who was a Masters holder with three years of teaching experience. He mentioned that the needs of the students had the first priority for him and said,

> Admission at the University Entrance Examination (UEE) or (*Konkur*) is the main objective for the students. Therefore, I try to prepare my students for that exam; you may name it teaching to the (*Konkur*) exam if you like. ... However, I take the advantage of different methods for fulfilling that goal and I don't limit myself to only one method (May 3, 2009).

From what he noted it could be inferred that Reza whose priority in selecting his teaching method was the students' needs was also favoring eclecticism. Nasim who had 15 years of teaching experience mentioned that based on administering a diagnostic test at the beginning of each grade, at the beginning of the education year starting from the first of *Mehr* (September, 22), she adapts her teaching approach. She noted that based on the students' achievements in the diagnostic test, she would be able to identify the students' weaknesses and take the necessary measures to help them. Overall, Nasim maintained that she was eclectic in terms of choosing her language teaching method. According to her, "different methods have good traits that should be implemented by the teacher" (May 4, 2009).

Selecting the teaching method based on the context and culture of the classroom was incorporated in comments from Simin with seven years of teaching experience. She mentioned that,

> In my opinion, the context and culture of the classroom determines the teaching method. In fact, these are the students who impose a specific approach on the teacher. For instance, in a distant village with more than 35 students in one class including some students who are participating in the English class for the second time, since they have

failed to pass the final examination the previous year, the teacher has to select a method or a combination of methods which fits them (May 6, 2009).

Although Simin mentioned in the first place that she was not familiar with any methods of language teaching since she was following her instructor's approach in one of the reading courses during her preservice program (see page 109), from what she mentioned, the researcher understood that she might have been eclectic in her real teaching practices without identifying any name for that.

In fact, Simin's way of adapting the language teaching methods was of a different kind. It was an adaptation linked to 'apprenticeship of observation' proposed by Lortie (1975). She had observed her instructor's example, kept a mental image of it in her mind and now she was adapting it according to her own circumstances, as she mentioned, "the context and culture of the classroom determines the teaching method" (May 6, 2009). This finding is in agreement with Cross's (2006) idea who argued that classroom language teaching is influenced by the nature of the very real social, cultural, historic, and political contexts within which teachers are expected to perform their role.

As the comments made by Ali, Atena, Atusa, Reza, Nasim and Simin who were favoring eclecticism indicated, the students' English level, needs, culture, context and personality had priorities for them while they were selecting and adapting their teaching method. According to Yan, Zhou, and Dai (2007), in teaching "many have come to favor of eclecticism, which generally holds that although no single ELT method can meet all teaching and learning needs, many ELT methods have valuable insights into ELT that should be drawn on" (p.2). Many scholars have been the proponents of eclecticism, such as Bell (1981), Rivers (1981), Brumfit (1984), and Schmidt (1989).

For instance, Rivers (1981, p.55) argued that eclecticism enables teachers "to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known language teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate." In fact, teachers "faced with the daily task of helping students to learn a new language cannot afford the luxury of complete dedication to each new method or approach that comes into vogue" (p.54).

Some other scholars like Stern (1983) and Marton (1988) are considered as the opponents of the eclectic approach. For instance, Stern (1983) expressed his doubt about eclecticism by mentioning that, "there is no agreement as to what the different methods precisely stand for, nor how they could be satisfactorily combined" (p.482). He also mentioned, eclecticism "does not offer any guidance on what basis and by what principles aspects of different methods can be selected and combined" (p.512). According to Widdowson (1990),

> It is quite common to hear teachers say that they do not subscribe to any particular approach or method in their teaching but are 'eclectic'. They thereby avoid commitment to any current fad that comes up on the whirligig of fashion. This might be regarded as prudent common sense. But if by eclecticism is meant the random and expedient use of whatever technique comes most readily to hand, then it has no merit whatever. It is indeed professionally irresponsible if it is claimed as a pedagogic principle (p.50).

Therefore, as Yan et al. (2007) maintained that, "without principles, eclecticism is likely to fall into a state of arbitrariness. Teachers need a set of principles in order to adapt their teaching procedure to the specific circumstances" (p.2).

Imposition of methodology by the textbooks. The second theme was the imposition of teaching methodology by the textbooks. Kiyan with two years of

experience noted that he could not step beyond what was mentioned in the textbooks. He maintained that,

> The content of the English textbooks has the first priority for me. In both teaching and testing, I cannot move beyond the predetermined content. If you say something which is not mentioned in the textbooks, the principal of the high school and parents would interfere. Once, I taught some English songs and asked the students to learn them. The next week, the principal warned me that you are here to teach the textbook not whatever you want. You see ... there is no way; I have to follow the textbook because the students are tested based on the content of the textbook (May 16, 2009).

As the comments by Kiyan revealed, some factors regarding policies or administration, like exams, textbooks, and teacher autonomy are beyond teachers' control. High school English teachers cannot do anything about these constraints in reality. What they are practically able to do are initiated from the context they are situated in. In fact, teachers teach to fit the school culture. This finding affirms Namaghi's (2009) idea who mentioned that, "teachers do not just teach: they teach within and for a social system. … teachers have limited opportunities to act based on the knowledge they accumulated in pre-service teacher education programs. They cannot even assert their own beliefs because of what others expect from them" (pp.111-112). In the same line, Gorsuch's (2000) study indicated that educational policies and educational cultures influenced the implementation of a specific methodology (CLT) by Japanese teachers.

Referring to the imposing role of the textbooks on teachers' methodology Akbari (2008) believed that textbooks have substituted methods in their traditional sense greatly in EFL contexts such as in Iran. According to him, "the concept of method has not been replaced by the concept of postmethod but rather by an era of textbook-defined

practice. What the majority of teachers teach and how they teach ... are now determined by textbooks" (p.647).

According to Namaghi (2009), the educational code and the nature of curriculum in Iran do not identify the right for language teachers to decide what curriculum and pedagogical strategies to implement and to what extent. He continued by saying that, "the national testing scheme [in Iran] reinforces the rigidity of the curriculum. This uniform scheme compels teachers to teach according to the syllabi prepared for them. Under these constraints, teachers no longer have professional autonomy about how best to teach" (p.119).

In fact, Namaghi's (2006) conclusion which identifies teachers as implementers is in congruence with Kiyan's remarks. According to Namaghi (2009),

> Over time teachers come to the bitter conclusion that it is these socially given constraints rather than their professional knowledge that shape their practice. Sometimes teachers reject the knowledge and skills that they learned at university in preference for the knowledge and skills valued by the teaching culture at their school (p.112).

Following CLT approach. The last theme turned out from the analysis of the data was following the CLT approach. Negin who holds a Masters degree with four years of teaching experience identified her methodology as within the paradigm of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT). She mentioned that, "I try to serve as a guide and facilitator for my students. I put the responsibility on the students' shoulders and my classes are more learner-centered rather than teacher-centered" (April 29, 2009).

As Richards (1996) noted that rational orientations of the teachers towards teaching and their beliefs about what makes good teaching lead them to create particular situations in their classrooms. These situations show the teachers' opinion about "the role of the teacher and of the learners, their beliefs about the kind of classroom climate they think best supports learning, what they believe constitutes good methodology and the quality of classroom interaction and language use they seek to achieve" (p.291). In this study, believing in communicative approach, Negin maintained that she tried to serve as the facilitator in the class and the students were responsible for their learning.

Negin believed in the advantage of group work. She maintained that, "Competition in group work would motivate the students to take part in the class activities more actively" (April 29, 2009). As an example, she reminisced that once she had a number of weak students in one of her classes. By engaging them in group activities, the students became more interested and motivated to learn English and their performance improved consequently. Negin found this technique beneficial for all of her students (April 29, 2009).

Referring to cooperative rather than individualistic nature of classroom activities suggested in CLT, Richards (2006) maintained that with "listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher for a model", the students feel more comfortable. In CLT, students are supposed to take more responsibility for their own learning and as Richards maintained, "teachers assume the rule of facilitator and monitor" (p.5). Another beneficial feature of the cooperative learning is giving responsibilities to each group member. According to Allport (1954), one of the advantages of cooperative learning groups is that the students share equal status in the context.

As the last question, the researcher asked if the teachers were following a lesson plan for their teaching activities. The teachers mentioned that they did not have a written lesson plan, but all of them maintained that they had a clear picture of what they wanted to do in their classrooms; in other words, they had a scheme of work in their minds. As an example, Negin with four years of experience noted that,

> I have no lesson plan. I decide what to do while I am in class. For instance, according to the class situation and readiness of the students, I decide to teach a reading passage first. Then, I would not teach the grammar in the same class period. The next period would be devoted to teaching grammar. I want students to concentrate on only one point in every session (April 29, 2009).

Lack of having a written lesson plan was iterated by Simin with seven years of teaching experience as well. She contended, "Now, after some years of teaching, I have the lesson plan in my mind and since the English books have not gone under any substantial changes for quite sometimes, I follow a routine way of teaching every year" (May 6, 2009).

Referring to the issue of the oldness of the English textbooks as one of the reasons of not having a daily lesson plan, Ali mentioned that,

> I have a yearly lesson plan, not a daily one. Unfortunately, the contents of the English textbooks have remained the same for a long time. After nine years of teaching the same textbook and content, I follow my mental lesson plan (April 30, 2009).

As the data suggested, except for Ali who was following a yearly lesson plan, none of the participants, whether experienced or less experienced, Masters holders or Bachelors holders, had a written lesson plan for their teaching.

Prior to giving a detailed account of the eight English teachers' real teaching actions, an analysis of high school English textbooks in Iran will be presented here. The rational for including this section is that it would provide the readers with some information about the high school English textbooks in Iran. In this way, one might understand the English teachers' teaching practice better.

Analysis of the high school English textbooks. The Ministry of Education in Iran is in charge of producing all the high school English textbooks with no other alternatives. The same English textbooks are taught in both public and private schools and the same syllabus is followed by all the English teachers. English teachers are supposed to teach one textbook during each educational year. Each academic year is comprised of two semesters of nearly 12 weeks. The students study the English language in both semesters, meaning that every textbook is divided into two rather equal portions and each portion would be covered over a period of one semester. Book one comprises of nine lessons; book two includes seven lessons and book three has six lessons and they all follow the same structure (Dahmardeh, 2009).

A typical English lesson in the Iranian high school English textbooks is divided into nine sections, namely New Words, Reading, Comprehension, Speak Out, Write It Down, Language Function, Pronunciation Practice, Vocabulary Drill, and Vocabulary list, which will be discussed in detail in the following (see Appendices G-I).

The first section deals with teaching New Words in the form of isolated sentences. For instance, in lesson two, English book three, we read: *"He loves to help people. Helping people is his end in life."* Here, the word *end,* underlined in the original text, is the new vocabulary which the students are supposed to learn. The second section

is a Reading passage. The students would read and understand the main ideas of the text. The Reading is followed by a Comprehension section which includes several open ended or short answer questions, true or false items, and multiple choice questions pertaining to the reading text. The next part is Speak Out. Speak Out introduces a grammatical structure along with some examples illustrating how to use that structure in a sentence. The teacher reads the examples aloud and students are required to repeat after their teacher. There are also some substitution drills for the students to practice. Moreover, there will be another grammatical structure which would be taught in a similar fashion as the previous one. Usually two grammatical structures are presented in each lesson deductively. In the next section, Write It Down, the students are asked to answer some questions based on what they have already learned in the previous part. After the Write It Down section, comes the Language Function which is similar to Speak Out. However, this part mainly concerns with daily conversations rather than focusing on a particular grammatical structure. For example, the topic of a conversation can be about a time table. The teacher would read the conversation aloud and the students are asked to practice and master the same dialogue through repetition. The next section is Pronunciation Practice. For instance, in lesson two, English book three, the concept of *Stress* is presented. Two different lists of words which have *Stress* on either their first or second syllable are also given. After listening to their teacher pronouncing the words aloud, the students would be required to identify some vocabularies from a given list which have a louder first syllable. Vocabulary Drill is the next section which is either a practice review for the vocabularies which are taught in this lesson or instructions on how to make different parts of speech. For instance, in the abovementioned lesson, the students are supposed to learn how to make adjectives by adding *–ful* or *-y* to some nouns. The last part is the vocabulary list which includes

several new vocabularies which have been presented throughout this lesson. The students are supposed to learn this list of Vocabulary.

The analysis of the textbooks and research suggest that the main concern of the textbooks is about reading comprehension and grammar. It is so because "each skill is defined in the framework of reading" (Dahmardeh, 2009, p.47). Concerning the language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking), reading is emphasized most because it is supposed that this skill is needed more at high school levels (*Ibid*). In an interview conducted by Dahmardeh with one of the authors of the high school English textbooks; there is a committee of writers, the author maintained that, "these textbooks are not communicative at all and the reason is the structural approach that is adopted by the committee of writers" (p.48). Having the findings from the interviews in terms of selecting the teaching method by the teachers and the analysis of the content of the high school English textbooks in mind, the result of observations will be presented next.

Findings of the observations. To examine the real teaching actions of the eight participants of the study, observations were conducted. Each of the high school EFL teachers was observed in his or her class for three consecutive class periods. It is necessary to mention that audio or video recording of the English classes was not allowed by the schools' administrative staff due to some reasons and the researcher only took field notes based on her observation checklist (See Appendix E). In the following Table (4.7), the researcher will present a summary of the observation data according to individual teacher's class.

Table 4.7

A Summary of the Observation Data

EFL Teachers' Name	Dates of Lessons	Grade Level	Class Activities
Ali	30/04/2009	1 (H)	Vocabulary list New words Language function
	07/05/2009	1 (H)	Oral questioning Reading
	14/05/2009	1 (H)	Oral questioning Grammar Pronunciation practice
Atena	09/05/2009	2(H)	New words Grammar
	16/05/2009	2(H)	Oral questioning Vocabulary list Reading
	23/05/2009	2(H)	Oral questioning Pronunciation practice Vocabulary review
Atusa	05/05/2009	2(H)	Grammar Vocabulary list
	12/05/2009	2(H)	Oral questioning New words Reading
	19/05/2009	2(H)	Language function Pronunciation practice
Kiyan	16/05/2009	1 (H)	New words Vocabulary list
	23/05/2009	1 (H)	Oral questioning Reading
	30/05/2009	1 (H)	Oral questioning Grammar
Nasim	04/05/2009	3 (H)	Vocabulary list Reading
	11/05/2009	3 (H)	Oral questioning Grammar
	18/05/2009	3 (H)	Oral questioning Language function Pronunciation practice
Negin	29/04/2009	3 (H)	Reading
	06/05/2009	3 (H)	Oral questioning Grammar
	13/05/2009	3 (H)	Oral questioning Language function Pronunciation practice Vocabulary drill
Reza	03/05/2009	1 (H)	New words
	10/05/2009	1 (H)	Oral questioning Reading
	17/05/2009	1 (H)	Oral questioning Grammar
Simin	06/05/2009	2 (H)	Reading
	13/05/2009	2 (H)	Oral questioning Grammar Language function
	20/05/2009	2 (H)	Oral questioning Pronunciation practice Vocabulary review

Note. H= High School

Active use of the mother tongue, the explicit teaching of rules in grammar instruction, teaching the vocabulary in the form of isolated word lists, devoting most of the class time to translation activities, and emphasizing on reading and grammar which are the salient features of the Grammar Translation Method were frequently observed in the majority of classes.

Among the techniques of other methods, asking for repetition and memorization, role-playing, correcting errors, paying attention to students' pronunciation and using a variety of substitution drills which are the prominent characteristics of the Audio-lingual Method and limited pair or group work activities which is one of the features of the Communicative Language Teaching approach were also observed in some classes.

However, the Grammar Translation Method was dominant in almost all classes. The finding of the current study is consistent with that of Li (1998) who found the Grammar Translation Method, the Audio-lingual Method, or a combination of the two characterized teaching method of a majority of English teachers in South Korea.

Some of the teachers did not make use of supplementary materials such as TVs, tape recorders, charts, pictures, advertisements, maps and test books. If teachers used a variety of supplementary materials, like what was mentioned above, the students would be exposed to a large amount of comprehensible input using language rich materials (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). In the classes observed by the researcher, the mentioned teachers relied heavily on the textbooks for teaching English.

For a better understanding of the high school English teachers' teaching actions Ali's, Simin's, and Negin's observed class activities will be described in detail as examples in the following. The observation data for the other teachers' classes were grouped under the above-mentioned three; however, similarities and differences are highlighted.

Ali's class. Ali's class was mostly conducted in Persian. The students were in grade one high school. He was observed by the researcher for the first time, while he was teaching the vocabulary list of lesson Nine, English book One (See Appendix G). In fact, he started the new lesson by working on the last part first. He pronounced the English words one by one and asked his pupils to repeat after him. Afterwards, he mentioned the Persian meaning of the words and asked the students to write them down somewhere in their English books. After finishing the first column, he asked one of his students who was good in English to pronounce the words in the first column once more along with their Persian meaning. Ali did the same for all three columns. Then he gave 3-5 minutes for the students to memorize the Persian meaning of the words. The next activity was teaching the new words, i.e., the first section of the lesson. He started reading the sentences one by one aloud while he was asking the students to repeat after him. Then, he started translating the sentences into Persian. At this stage, he asked the students to write down the Persian equivalent of the underlined English new words. The students were free to jot down the meaning of the whole sentence if they wished. Next, he presented some synonyms and antonyms for the new underlined words. For instance, he mentioned the word '*whole*' as the synonym for the word '*entire*'. The word '*friend*' was referred to as the opposite of the word '*enemy*'. He finished the class by teaching part (F) of the lesson which was Language Function. He read the mentioned part once

and asked the students to memorize the conversation for the next class period (April 30, 2009).

During the second observation, the teacher started the class by calling the names of five students from the class attendance list to come to the board to answer some questions pertaining to the previous lesson, including asking the students to translate some words or sentences form the New Words part into Persian. They were also asked to role-play the conversation which they were taught during the last session. The next activity was teaching the reading text. Ali read the passage twice at a slow pace, while his students were listening and looking at their textbooks. Then, he played the tape recorder. The students listened to the reading text once more. Then, he asked one of his talented students to read the text. He was correcting the student's pronunciation whenever deemed necessary. Afterwards, he translated the passage into Persian, paragraph by paragraph, with the help of the students. The students were free to jot down the meaning of the whole text if they liked. They were also able to raise their hands at any time and ask for repetition or meaning of a word. At the end of the session the students were asked to work on the meaning of the reading text in pairs and ask questions if there were any (May 7, 2009).

In the third class observation, the teacher started the class like the previous session i.e., asking some questions mostly of translation nature relating to the previous lesson by summoning the students to the board. Afterwards, Ali began teaching the grammar. He explained the grammar elaborately in the Persian language by giving the grammatical structure first and then giving some examples on the blackboard. In the mean time, he asked the students to take notes. For instance, the grammar was about the present perfect tense. First, he defined the tense in Persian and wrote its structure on the

blackboard. Then, He wrote some examples in the Persian language followed by the same examples in English. After making sure that all of his pupils had understood the grammatical structure by asking some substitution drills, the students were told to answer the questions in their textbook related to that grammar. Afterwards, he asked one of his smart students to come to the blackboard and write down the answers for others to copy down either in their books or notebooks. The students were free to raise their hands and ask any question related to the grammar or meaning of the exercises. As the last activity, he taught the pronunciation part of the lesson by pronouncing the words in each category aloud and asking the pupils to repeat after him. Here, the students were required to identify the difference between the / eɪ / sound, as in *"late"*, and / e / sound, as in *"let"*. They should also distinguish between the / aʊ / sound, as in *"house"*, and /əʊ / sound, as in *"go"*. The students' errors were corrected immediately. Finally, Ali asked his pupils to answer the remaining exercises of the lesson at home. He also reminded them to prepare themselves for a written exam including some translation and grammatical exercises for the next class period (May 14, 2009).

As it could be understood from Ali's class observation, although the rote repetition of words and sentences, use of substitution drills, role-play and correction of errors which are the salient features of the Audio-Lingual Method were implemented in Ali's class activities, the techniques of the Grammar Translation Method, such as active use of the mother tongue, giving the students a list of vocabulary to memorize, teaching the grammar deductively and so on were used more frequently in his class. In fact, the dominant method of teaching in Ali's class was the Grammar Translation Method, while in the interview he claimed to be eclectic (see pages 147-148).

It is necessary to mention that Kiyan, Nasim, and Reza followed almost a similar way of teaching in presenting the language materials like that of Ali. The differences were just in the order of teaching the different parts and using supplementary materials. For instance, Nasim started the lesson by teaching the vocabulary part (part I) first (May 4, 2009), while Kiyan (May 16, 2009) and Reza (May 3, 2009) first started by teaching the New Words (part A). Regarding the use of supplementary materials, Kiyan (May 23, 2009) and Nasim (May 4, 2009) made use of a tape recorder for teaching the reading text. First, they read the texts aloud themselves and then played the recorder. Nasim also used some flash cards for teaching grammar (May 11, 2009). Kiyan had asked his pupils to buy a supplementary test book. When it came to grammar, he asked his students to open their test books and do the exercises pertaining to that grammatical structure (May 30, 2009). However, Reza did not use any supplementary material and only relied on the textbook. The Grammar Translation Method of teaching was dominant in the classes of Kiyan, Nasim, and Reza as well.

Simin's class. Simin was observed for the first time by the researcher while she was teaching the reading part of lesson Seven, English book Two (See Appendix H). She started her class by greeting the students in English. However, the rest of the class was mostly managed in the Persian language. She began by asking her students to open their books on page 85. She played a tape recorder, while the students were only listening and looking at their books. Afterwards, she asked one of the volunteers to read the text once more. She gave the pupils five minutes to read the text in silence and asked their possible problems in terms of pronouncing the words only. Then, from the first row, the students began reading the text, while Simin was correcting their pronunciation errors frequently. Each student would read just one sentence. Then, the pupils were asked to sit in groups of three, read the text once more and tell their group members

whatever they had understood about the text, paragraph by paragraph in Persian. Each group had a representative; she would raise her hand and tell the main idea of the paragraph to the class. Simin intervened whenever deemed necessary. Then, she asked some questions pertaining to each paragraph in English. The students were encouraged to give the answer in English; however, if they were not able to do so, answers in Persian would also be accepted. Then, Simin started translating the text into Persian. The students were free to listen or even take notes if they wished. The class ended by asking the students to prepare themselves for an oral questioning for the next time (May 6, 2009).

The second period was also started with some English greetings such as, *Hello, How are you today?*, *Who is absent today?*, and the like by the teacher. The students greeted her in English as well. Afterwards, three students were asked to come to the board to answer some oral questions. Simin started with some meaning-telling activities. The students were supposed to tell the meaning of the English words asked by her in Persian. They were also required to tell the synonym of some of the previously taught English words. In both cases, the summoned students' textbooks were closed. Then, she asked the students to open their books, read one or two sentences, depending on the length of the sentences, and translate them into Persian. Afterwards, Simin began teaching the grammar related to the Conditional Sentences (Type 2). She taught the grammar deductively by giving the structure first and then, providing some examples. The pupils were asked to read the examples in Speaking (1) and (2) aloud, while analyzing the two parts of the conditional sentences, i.e., before and after comma. For instance, in the sentence: *If Ali knew you lived here, he would come to see you*, the pupil mentioned, "If+ Simple Past, Past Future." She practiced the structure by using some substitution drills. Then, Simin asked her students to write down the answers of the

grammar exercises in their books. After about 30 minutes, she called the students'

names one by one from the attendance list to come and write the answers on the

blackboard. She would correct them if it was necessary. The students also had a test

book. Simin asked them to open it and do ten multiple choice questions pertaining to the

grammar related to the Conditional Sentences (Type 2). As the final activity, she taught

part (F), Language Function by reading it aloud and asking the students to repeat after

her. The students were asked to memorize it for the next time (May 13, 2009).

The third period was begun like the previous two, i.e., greeting the students in

English, calling the names of some students to come to the front of the class to answer

some oral questions pertaining to the translation of reading and the grammar structure.

They were also asked to role-play the conversation in pairs. Then, Simin taught the

remaining parts of lesson Seven including parts (G) and (H), which were Pronunciation

Practice and Vocabulary Review respectively. She read the words in part (G) aloud and

asked her pupils to put them in the appropriate columns. Afterwards, she gave the

students 10 minutes to answer part (H) and then she checked the answers orally. Since

the students were required to sit for an exam including the whole content of their

English textbook in the following week, Simin asked them to review the lessons in their

groups one by one and pose their questions about any problematic areas (May 20,

2009).

As the data revealed, although some techniques of Communicative Language

Teaching (CLT), such as managing the class through group work and permitting

students to respond in the target language, their native language, or a mixture of the two

and of Audio-Lingual Method like rote repetition and memorization as well as error

correction were practiced in Simin's class, most of the class time was spent using the

techniques of the Grammar Translation Method such as unlimited use of the mother tongue, elaborate explanations of grammar and translation of disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue; therefore, the dominant method of teaching in her class was the Grammar Translation. However, it should be noted that during the course of interview, Simin indirectly maintained that she was eclectic in teaching (see pages 149-150).

It should be noted that, Atena and Atusa also followed the same way of teaching like that of Simin. The differences were in the order of teaching the different parts; for instance, Atena started the lesson by teaching the New Words first (May 9, 2009), while Atusa first started by teaching Grammar (May 5, 2009). Atena and Atusa did not use any supplementary material and just relied on the textbook. They read the text themselves and asked the students to repeat after them. Overall, they also mostly stuck to the Grammar Translation Method for their teaching action.

As the data has indicated up to this point, the majority of the high school English teachers in this study, whether experienced, such as Ali, Nasim and Simin, less experienced, like Atena, Atusa and Kiyan, or even Masters holder, such as Reza followed the techniques of the Grammar Translation Method mostly in their classes; although in the first place (pre-observation interviews) they referred to other methods as their teaching approaches. However, Negin's class was slightly different from the others in terms of conducting group activities. In the following, a detailed description of Negin's class will be presented.

Negin's class. The observation data revealed that Negin was good at managing her English class by conducting group activities. In almost every session observed, Negin's students were engaged in some kind of peer work in groups of three or four. For every moment of a classroom hour, certain choices were made. In her class, the students were free to choose their group members and were given specific roles and responsibilities.The size of the classroom seemed to be slightly small and crowded for the actual number of the students in the class. However, it still had space so that students could move around for their group work if they needed to do so.

The main part of the first observation was a reading task from lesson Six, English book Three (See Appendix I). The class was divided into small groups of three to four students. Each group had a representative who helped her peers read the text in English. They read the text and then shared their opinions about it within the group. The group representative was trying to explain the important points to her peers. They were allowed to raise their hands and ask for help from the teacher if they had any difficulties, either in English or in Persian. After finishing the group work, Negin asked her pupils some comprehension questions pertaining to the text. Some of the students answered in English, while the majority of them responded in Persian. Afterwards, a representative from each group read just one paragraph and translated it into Persian. The teacher would correct them whenever deemed necessary. The whole class time was spent on the reading text. The students were asked to prepare themselves for an oral questioning including some meaning-telling and translation activities, for the following session (April 29, 2009).

The second period started by calling two students to come to the front of the class to answer some oral questions. Afterwards, Negin began teaching the grammar

while using the Persian language. She wrote some examples on the blackboard and tried to explain the grammar inductively. At this time, she asked her students just to listen and postpone writing the points in their notebooks till the time she allowed. Later on, the pupils were allowed to take notes from what was written on the board, if they wished. Then, the students were told to open their books and answer the questions relating to the grammar in their groups. She walked up to each group and asked if they had any problems. The next activity was writing the accurate answers on the board by the students. The pupils were told to prepare themselves for some oral questioning including translation of the text and grammar for the next period (May 6, 2009).

The third period started with some oral questionings for the students. Negin called the name of the students one by one from her attendance list to stand up, translate one paragraph, give the Persian meaning of the English words asked by her and explain the grammatical structure by providing some examples. Then, Negin taught part (F), Language Function by reading it aloud once and asked her pupils if they had any difficulties in terms of pronouncing the words. Afterwards, the students were told to practice the conversation with a partner from their group. The topic of the conversation was about asking for direction. Two members of each group volunteered to come to the board and role played the conversation. Then, the teacher taught part (G) which was related to pronunciation. She read the words aloud twice and the pupils were asked to repeat after her and then put the words in the accurate column. Afterwards, the students were given five minutes to answer part (H) which was a vocabulary drill in their group. Afterwards, a representative from each group would stand up and read only one sentence with the blank filled. As the last activity, Negin distributed two exam papers from the previous years among the students and asked them to answer one in class in their group and one at home for the next period (May 13, 2009).

Although group work activity and use of the target language, native language, or a mixture of the two which are features of Communicative language Teaching approach was observed frequently in Negin's class; however, the techniques of the Grammar Translation Method, such as the use of mother tongue as well as translation activities and of Audio-lingual Method, such as inductive teaching of grammar, role-play, repetition and so on were also observed. It could be claimed that her method of teaching was mostly a combination of the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-lingual Method with more reliance upon the first one. However, during the interview session, Negin mentioned that she was following the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in her classroom practices (see page 153).

As the data indicated, the Grammar Translation Method was the dominant method of teaching in almost all classes observed and there were not any significant differences between more experienced or less experienced and Masters holders or Bachelors holders in terms of selecting the teaching method. It should be noted that, although the curriculum in Iranian high schools is a top-down curriculum, meaning that the Ministry of Education dictates all the decisions regarding the textbook selection and the exams, not much control is exerted on the teaching methodology. In fact, the high school English teachers have the authority to select their method of teaching; however, all of them are required to cover the same textbooks and prepare the students for exams.

Findings of the post-observation interviews. In the post-observation interview, the researcher asked the teachers to recall what they did in their classes and why there were discrepancies between what they believed as their teaching approach, as mentioned in the interviews, and what they really practiced.

Institutional Constraints. Almost all of the teachers asserted that they were under the institutional constraints. For instance, Kiyan with two years of teaching experience noted that,

> Both I and my students like oral skills. However, we ignore them. You know why.... because they are not tested in the final exams. Students' pass rate is the only criterion for judging the teachers' efficiency, not the teachers' teaching knowledge and skills. Let me share with you one of my teaching memories. During the first years of my teaching profession, the students' result in the final exams was not what I expected. After consulting with my colleagues who had obtained satisfying final results, I understood that the only key to success is teaching to the test. Then, I started investigating the previous sample tests. Now, I know very well what to cover and what to ignore while I am teaching (May 30, 2009).

Likewise, Negin, a Masters holder with four years of teaching experience argued, "the students' outcome is very important to me. I try to achieve that objective by any means and method possible." When the researcher enquired what the constraining factors that were impeding her from practicing CLT, she mentioned that sometimes the large size of the classes did not allow learner-centered teaching. She added that, "in classes with large number of students, it is very difficult to do the learners' needs analysis and produce suitable tasks and activities" (May 13, 2009).

Negin also referred to non-communicative high school examinations and students' difficulty and hesitation to participate in communicative activities as other factors impeding her from following the principles of CLT closely (May 13, 2009). This finding is consistent with that of Yu's (2001) who referred to the constraining factors that Chinese teachers have when implementing CLT. According to him,

> Economically speaking, the low incomes of English teachers drive them into taking a second or even a third teaching job. "Consequently, few university or secondary school teachers will spend time analyzing

learners' needs or designing their own syllabi, nor will they collect suitable materials to create communicative tasks and activities" (Hui, 1997, p. 38). In addition, classrooms with 60 students are too crowded for learner-centered teaching. Culturally, due to the pervasive influence of Confucian ideas, "teachers are viewed as knowledge holders. If teachers do not display their knowledge in lectures, or if they play games with students or ask students to role-play in class, then they are not doing their job!" (p.38). But the most important constraint comes from the lack of qualified English teachers (Yu, 2001, pp. 196-197).

Borg (2009), Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) and Karavas-Doukas (1996) had also addressed the issue of mismatch between the teachers' stated beliefs and observed practices. As Borg (2009) argued, "a lack of congruence between teachers' beliefs and their practices should not be seen as a flaw in teachers". According to him, "the social, institutional, instructional, and physical settings in which teachers work often constrain what they can do" (p.167). The consequence of these constraints may be a teaching which does not show the teachers' ideals. Another issue also raised by Borg is that a teacher has a complex set of beliefs that may not always be congruous to one another; therefore, although what teachers do may seem incompatible with a certain belief, more analysis often show that there is an alternative, more powerful belief that is influencing classroom practice. Therefore, as he maintained, mismatches between teachers' beliefs and practices should not be criticized; since, they display exciting opportunities for profound explorations of teachers, their cognitions, their teaching, and the settings in which they work.

There are many examples of inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and the reality of their actions in the classroom, in the existing literature. For instance, Yim (1993) carried out a study about L2 teachers in Singapore. The teachers described their teaching methodology as communicative, in which emphasis was put on authentic meaning-focused activities. However, the observation data revealed that the majority of

them implemented accuracy-focused activities since they believed these were essential for making the students ready for examinations (cited in Richards, 1996).

As Richards (1996) had mentioned, the issue of mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and their real practices was observed in Frank's case as well. Frank was an experienced ESL teacher at the British Council in Hong Kong. He favored communicative approach to teaching and considered himself as a facilitator whose responsibility was to create an optimum learning environment. However, as the observation data showed, his class was managed mostly by conducting a grammar-focused series of activities in the form of a writing task. When asked if this lesson was the reflection of his beliefs in a communicative approach to teaching, he asserted,

> I don't necessarily apply teaching principles all the time. My general principle is just to make things student-centered and communicative. The problem with this class is that I can't always do that because people are very shy. So you can't really make it student-centered because the students don't say anything. You have to call everyone by their name which makes it a little bit more teacher-centered. It was communicative in a sense since they were writing together in groups rather than on their own. That's why I got them around the table to emphasize they are not just working on their own (quoted in Richards, 1996, p.292).

As the data suggested, the majority of the high school English teachers prefer to teach to the test, since the students' outcomes are of great importance for both the parents and school principles. Therefore, they select a method which best answers this demand, which is the Grammar Translation Method for the majority of them. The communicative ability of the students is measured neither in school examinations, nor in University Entrance Examination (*Konkur*); therefore, it is not valued much by teachers and higher authorities.

According to the teachers, to facilitate the implementation of new trends in teaching English, such as CLT or TBLT, the curriculum for teaching English in Iranian high school system should undergo substantial changes and a series of new textbooks should be designed and published. According to them, the new textbooks should be written according to communicative approaches and should be compatible with the task-based innovation. As they argued, the grammar-based structure of the examinations should also change to a communicative-based one.

Eventually, the researcher asked the high school English teachers and EFL methods course lecturers to give some suggestions for the improvement of preservice EFL teacher education in Iran.

Some of the teachers commented that the curriculum of their preservice education contained some courses which according to them were not of relevant use in their real classes. They suggested eliminating those courses and adding some other beneficial courses which would assist them in improving their level of language proficiency. As an example, Negin asserted that,

> Since I had participated in English classes at private language institutes for the period of 10-12 semesters while I was doing my Bachelors degree, I didn't have much problem in terms of communicating in English. When I asked some of my colleagues if they had experienced any problems while teaching English at high schools, many of them were mentioning that they had some problems in communicating in English (April 29, 2009).

Referring to the need for inclusion of more courses in preservice EFL teacher education to improve the teachers' command of English, Ali asserted that,

One of the problems with English education in Iran is the poor quality of teachers in terms of speaking. Although we have spent about 10 years learning English, how many of us can really communicate in English well? So, how is it possible to ask the students to learn to communicate in English while their teachers cannot? Hence, the quality of teachers in terms of language proficiency and their preparation should be addressed first (May 17, 2009).

The issue of language incompetency of some English teachers was addressed by nearly all the participants. According to them, the entrance process in which student teachers were accepted to the courses should undergo alteration. They maintained that those who were talented, knowledgeable, and had a high command of language should be admitted at teacher education programs.

The participants identified the following criteria to be included in the preservice EFL teacher education programs entrance exam: test of language proficiency, test of personality and interview. They found the assessment of the language proficiency necessary and maintained that a language proficiency test should be administered at the beginning of the teacher education programs. Some of the participants asserted they just wanted to enter the course, although they admitted that they failed to have the appropriate qualifications. For instance, Kiyan noted that, "No matter how successful you are and which university you have graduated from, as an English teacher you should be able to communicate in English, fully" (May 16, 2009). He continued that,

I know there are some teachers like me. I have learned English for almost 10 years, but still I have some problems in terms of having a simple conversation in English. In my opinion, English education in Iran is a kind of dumb education (May 16, 2009).

As the participants of the study maintained and the investigation of the curriculum of ELT, ELL and ET (Appendices J-L) revealed, only a few courses in preservice EFL teacher education in Iran were capable of achieving the objective of

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"improving the communicative command of the language rather than knowledge of it" (Cullen, 1994, p.164) and these courses were limited to the very first semesters of the their study.

Language proficiency is considered as one of the most fundamental features of a good language teacher (Brown, 2001; Lange, l990). As Doff (1987) asserted, a teacher's confidence in the classroom is undermined by a poor command of the English language. According to De Lima (2001), "a foreign language teacher's lack of proficiency leads students to believe that learning a foreign language consists of the completion of textbook activities rather than learning the language for the purpose of communication" (p.147).

The need for the language improvement of preservice teachers is also addressed in Berry's study (1990) carried out in Poland. Amongst the three components, i.e., methodology, theory of language teaching, and language improvement, the latter was ranked as the most important component needed by English teachers teaching at the secondary level. In the same line, Cullen (1994) argued that in the countries where English is not a medium of instruction, the main interest of English teachers is,

> the need to improve their own command of the language so that they
> can use it more fluently, and above all, more confidently, in the
> classroom. A teacher training course which fails to take this into
> account is arguably failing to meet the needs or respond to the wishes
> of the teachers themselves (p.164).

Further training in preservice EFL teacher education courses regarding assessment skills was another request put forward by some of the teachers. For instance, Simin noted that,

One of the big problems that I am still struggling is the issue of how to assess my students. Scoring the students out of 20 seems to me inadequate. How do I say that this child is an "18" student? In fact, this student might have done her/his very best. I have trouble with that (May 20, 2009).

The teachers commented that the content and curriculum of the preservice EFL teacher education in Iran should be updated, should be more communicative and should undergo substantial changes to include both the theoretical and practical aspects of ELT. According to them, at present, the courses in preservice programs in Iran are education-ridden and theory-oriented, while they argued that they needed more practical grounding. They maintained that in preservice EFL teacher education even the practical courses were provided in a theoretical way, such as the EFL methods course. They believed that more systematic Needs Analysis of the student teachers' needs should be done in order to set the priorities.

The high school English teachers also asked for more inservice courses and programs which would familiarize them with and update their knowledge about the current methods and innovative techniques in teaching English. As Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) maintained, unless professional development programs are carefully designed and implemented to provide continuity between what teachers learn and what goes on in their classrooms and schools, these activities are not likely to produce any long-lasting effects on either teacher competence or student outcomes (cited in Lewis et al., 1999) .

EFL methods course lecturers argued that more systematic course design procedures were needed involving outsiders and insiders. Lecturers asked for more collaboration between the experts and the teachers' associations and forums. According

to them, more systematic piloting of the initial courses should be carried out and attempts should be made for adaptations and renewal of the programs. Catching up with the fresh developments in the field of teaching in general and EFL in particular worldwide was another issue proposed by the EFL methods course lecturers for the improvement of preservice EFL teacher education programs in Iran.

Summary of the findings for research question three. Six high school English teachers believed in the advantage of the eclectic approach. One asserted that his teaching method was imposed by the textbooks and the other identified her methodology within the paradigm of Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT).

Despite of all these claims, the observation data suggested that although a few techniques of some methods, such as Audio-Lingual and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) were practiced by the respective English teachers including repetition, grouping the students and the like, the dominant approach in almost all classes observed was the Grammar Translation Method with heavy focus on form and translation.

When the researcher asked the teachers about the reason for the discrepancy between what they believed and what they really practiced, almost all of the participants referred to the institutional and contextual constraints as hindering factors.

Except for one of the participants who mentioned that he only had a yearly lesson plan, the others maintained that they did not have a written lesson plan and in fact, they followed a mental lesson plan for their every day teaching activity. The issue

of the oldness of the English textbooks was also referred to as the reason for not having

a lesson plan by some teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the selected high school English teachers in Semnan Province, Iran developed their knowledge about EFL teaching methodologies in the EFL methods course and how they used or adapted that knowledge in their real teaching practices. In order to systematically analyze the data, the researcher drew on the sociocultural theory of situated learning (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991), as the theoretical framework of this study. The key concepts in this theory are: learning involves becoming a member of a community of practice in which one can master knowledge and skills; learning is embedded within an activity, a context and a culture; and learning takes place through engagement in practices and activities of a community. In this chapter, the researcher first discusses the findings. Then, she proposes some implications for preservice EFL teacher education and presents the limitations of the study. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What were the main characteristics of the EFL methods course in the preservice EFL teacher education program in Iran?
2. How did the EFL methods course contribute to the practices of high school English teachers in Semnan Province?
3. How do high school English teachers in Semnan province, Iran use or adapt the language teaching methods in their classrooms?

Discussion of the Findings

1) Almost all of the high school English teachers were introduced to the methods and approaches of language teaching presented in their reference books for the

EFL methods course; however, these methods and approaches were decontextualised from practice.

One of the key concepts in the sociocultural theory of situated learning is that learning is situated in the social context. It is noted that in the EFL methods course, one key feature identified was that the methods and approaches were not contextualized and the contextualization had to happen during the teaching practicum or actual teaching. Since some of the teachers had not gone through practicum, they first learned how to contextualize the methods and approaches while on the job, or by recalling their own English learning experiences. Freeman and Richards (1993) argued that "the foundations of an individual's ideas about teaching are well established through the experience of being a student" (p.210). As evidence to Freeman and Richards's (1993) remark, a number of participants (e.g. Atusa, Negin) in this study also maintained that in their microteaching, they were teaching in the way that they were taught. To sum up, teachers learn to teach differently in different ways: language learning experience, preservice education, classroom observations as student teachers, on the job experience, professional development, networking, research in practice, and graduate studies.

2) EFL methods course classes were lecture-centered and lecturer-fronted.

One of the key features of the sociocultural theory of situated learning is that that individuals do not learn individually, but they learn in groups in social contexts and through engaging in social activities. During the study, it was found that in the EFL methods course, the lecturers were non-interactive and there was not much space for pair or small group discussions, but the student teachers formed their own groups out of the EFL methods course context. A majority of the teachers confirmed the role of

interaction and collaboration with their fellow student teachers as one of the sources of their learning and they asserted that they learned many professional discourses during their group discussions out of the course context. Moreover, they maintained that they learned many things from interacting and consulting with their colleagues either within the school context or in other communities of practice such as English teachers' associations and forums.

3) Reference books and handouts which were used as the artifacts in the EFL methods course were reported to play mediating roles in teachers' learning. The teachers asked for the use of the audio-visual aids in the EFL methods course.

As Johnson (2009) argued, a sociocultural perspective on learning posits that learning happens through engagement in social activities and "it is the social relationships and the culturally constructed materials, signs and symbols, referred to as semiotic artifacts," that mediate learning (p.1). As Holland and Lave (2001) maintained, the artifacts which comprise of whiteboards, journal articles, worksheets, videos and posters that learners produce give flesh to identities in practice. Singh and Richards (2008) brought examples of how the artifacts can contribute to student teachers' learning:

> … the course might make use of videoed lesson segments or lesson transcripts to raise awareness of issues such as action zones, group dynamics, turn-taking, corrective feedback, teacher's role etc. When discussing a new concept such as focus-on-form, through a video analysis participants think about what they see and share and discuss it with colleagues. Through such discussions teacher-learners reveal their implicit understandings of the importance of grammar, acquisition versus learning, focus-on-form and so on.

4) The majority of teachers maintained that they were eclectic in teaching and did not stick to a single method. They asserted that they would adapt their teaching

method based on the students' English level, needs, culture, context and personality.

As Johnston and Goettsch (2000) asserted, the knowledge base of language teaching is situational, process-oriented, and contextualized, meaning that the knowledge base is utilized in the classroom; that the knowledge is rooted in a mainly dialogical approach to teaching in which there is a continuous interaction between the teachers' knowledge and action and teachers' awareness of student's knowledge and student's learning. The teachers in this study were mainly concerned with the students' needs and were teaching differently to meet those needs which were culture and context- specific. This finding supports Grittner's (1990) idea who maintained that "no teaching method is suggested for any one teacher, for any one class, or for any one individual" (p.39). This study also confirms Zuengler and Miller's (2006) view that relativism has shifted the focus of language teaching methods and approaches away from external ways to deal with language content to the local practice of teachers and the local interpretations of learners. Kumaravadivelu (1994) suggested teacher autonomy and proposed "location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative practices" in the postmethod condition (p.29); however, in the context of this study, teachers were partially autonomous. In fact, they adapted their teaching method to meet the students' needs, but methods and approaches they chose were under the influence of the textbooks as well as the school culture. As Mullock (2006) argued, institutional factors affect teachers' decision making.

5) In practice, the Grammar Translation Method of teaching was dominant in majority of the classes observed.

Although the majority of teachers claimed that they were eclectic in teaching, what was observed in most classes was the dominance of the Grammar Translation Method. This may be justified because of the structure of the Iranian high school English textbooks which focused on form and translation.

In an interview conducted by Dahmardeh (2009) with one of the authors of the high school English textbooks from a committee of writers, the author maintained that, "these textbooks are not communicative at all and the reason is the structural approach that is adopted by the committee of writers" (p.48). If we are willing to initiate changes in our approach to teaching English, these changes must happen at all the levels.

For instance, if we want teachers to implement innovative methods, such as CLT or TBLT in their classes, they should be trained in advance and this training can happen in the EFL methods course. Instead of introducing the student teachers to a set of discrete and decontextualised language teaching methods, we can provide them with the relevant skills necessary for implementing CLT or TBLT.

Furthermore, it is difficult to ask the teachers to change their way of teaching from a form-focused approach to a communicative-based approach, while the structure of the University Entrance Examination (UEE) or *Konkur* in Iran is still grammar-oriented. As Li (1998) asserted, to adopt any language teaching approach such as CLT, EFL countries need to "change their fundamental approach to education and that implementation should be gradual and grounded in the countries' own EFL situations" (p.677). According to him, "the grammar-based English language syllabi makes the English teaching situation complex" and the local use of any approaches such as CLT difficult (Li, 1998, p.680).

Implications for Preservice EFL Teacher Education

This study was based on a close study of the experiences of eight high school English teachers; thus, the implication of the study for preservice EFL teacher education is limited. Nevertheless, some suggestions are made with a view to address the key issues that emerged. These are offered as suggestions subject to more extensive research.

To further strengthen the preservice EFL teacher education program the following issues need to be addressed:

1) The content of the EFL methods course should comprise of both theoretical and practical aspects and the latter aspect should be realized in practice. In fact, while the importance of theoretical understanding cannot be underestimated, course content should reflect most directly those skills that will be needed in teaching students in the high schools.

2) The practicum component should be included in the curriculum of all the English majors, i.e. English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature and English Translation (ELT, ELL, and ET) and it should be realized in practice. The practicum should be monitored in detail.

3) Ways should be found to sustain the community of teachers after the preservice courses end. This community can provide teachers support as they encounter new theories and methodologies. Continuous institutional support is also necessary for the teachers' professional development and the expansion of their knowledge and practice.

4) The nature and sequence of preservice EFL teacher education courses should be carefully assessed. There should be a willingness to alter or modify courses that are not relevant to the future needs of the teachers. Preservice EFL teacher education programs should emphasize courses on improving the spoken English of teachers, testing, and more practice-oriented (as opposed to theory-oriented) teaching methods.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, the subjects of the study comprised of only high school English teachers and three EFL methods course lecturers who worked in Semnan Province, Iran, because of time and cost constraints and did not include the whole population of EFL teachers and lecturers in Iran. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable beyond the targeted population. Secondly, the researcher was not able to observe the EFL methods course classes due to the third-party permission; therefore, she merely relied on the information provided in the interviews. Thirdly, during the observations of the classrooms, the researcher negotiated her role with the teachers. It was jointly agreed that the researcher would sit at the back of the class during the observations. This presented a limitation; however, the researcher conducted interviews with the teachers immediately after the observations to overcome some of the limitations of the observations. This matter has been discussed in greater length in chapter three (see page 82). Finally, the present study was truly qualitative in nature. Incorporating a quantitative study using a survey would help the researcher to gain a broader insight about the phenomenon under study. The mixed method of qualitative and quantitative inquiry would complement one another. In fact, what one method could not capture, the other would; therefore, it may help to increase the validity of the study.