

Towards the exploration of English language in-service teachers' ecologies of knowledges

Adriana Castañeda Londoño

Abstract

In the following chapter, I aim at describing the reasons to inquire about English language in-service (ELI hereafter) teachers' ecologies of knowledges. The quest for ELI teachers' knowledges is informed by theoretical tenets of the Epistemologies of the South (De Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009, 2010) poststructuralism in English language teaching (ELT henceforth) (Baxter, 2003), and postcolonial thought (Díaz, 2003). It is my intention to show that as ELI teachers' knowledges have not been considered when framing public policy in ELT (Cárdenas, 2004, González, 2007) or -in my view- as an asset in the field, such knowledges might not have been sufficiently explored leading to a waste of valuable experience. I have brought up the concept of 'ecologies of knowledges', on the one hand because this concept entails the co-existence of different ways of knowing within ELI teachers' construction of their being as professionals in the ELT area –co-existence that is still underexplored. On the other hand, I intend to understand how ELI teachers interrelate to such knowledges. I explore a philosophical understanding of knowledge starting with Plato and then I introduce a Foucauldian perspective. I also provide a glance towards a problematization of knowledge within ELT while finding some existing tensions in this field in regards to ELI teachers' knowledge which I back up with empirical data. I attempt to show that ELI teachers have not been recognized as intellectuals (Giroux, 1997) and such an experience is being wasted, epistemologically speaking. An ecology of knowledges sheds light towards how institutional, personal and other types of knowledge co-exist with one another in the conformation of ELI teachers' beings.

Keywords: English Language Teachers' Knowledges, Teachers' Professional Development, Ecologies of Knowledges, Knowledge.

Introduction

This chapter aims at framing my research interest in English language in-service (ELI) teachers' knowledges. Particularly, I will approach different theoretical and empirical basis to justify the need to inquire into the research question:

How do English language in-service teachers relate to their ecologies of knowledges?

In the first part of the text I will use the more familiar term *knowledge* in singular as it has been conceptualized in our Western reductionist thinking. Then, I will use the more flexible and embracing word *knowledges* (De Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009). By ELI teachers' knowledges, I not only refer to ELI teachers' experiences, theories, beliefs, actions, and skills (Díaz Maggioli, 2012) that these teachers are supposed to hold but also to the realm of their silenced, invisibilized, or unknown knowledges and the variety of ways in which they may interrelate.

In what follows readers will find first, the underlying causes and reasons to be interested in the theme of ELI teachers' knowledges. Second, I will approach the umbrella term of knowledge from a philosophical stance. Next, I will move on to a conceptualization of knowledge in ELT through themes such as teachers' knowledge base, cognition, and personal epistemologies. Third, I will posit my own epistemological positioning towards a re-conceptualization of ELI teachers' knowledge using the concept of *knowledges*. I will explain the extant gaps/tensions in ELT regarding ELI teachers' knowledges. As well, I will account for an empirical exploration of ELI teachers' relation to knowledges. Finally, I will come back to the research question adding the research objectives and drawing some concluding remarks from the chapter.

Background

What is knowledge? Who defines what knowledge is? What kind of knowledge(s) is/are constructed by ELI teachers? What do they do with it/them? Who acknowledges that/those knowledge(s)? Do teachers share what they know? And if so, how? Do teachers participate in learning opportunities? Finally, do teachers know that they know? These are some puzzling questions that guide my inquiry towards teachers' knowledges.

This interest stems from three sources. First, the realization that teachers have many things to say based on their expertise as I could witness visiting several classes along some years of experience being a teacher supervisor. The conclusion that I draw from the supervision practice is that teachers aim at coping with institutional standards while developing their own repertoires. Such repertoires are made of ideas, plans, questions, activities, *in situ* decision-making, appropriation of new trends, self-initiated or institutionally guided research (Ubaque & Castañeda-Peña 2017), and analysis of students' beings to teach their lessons better and better. I believe that knowledge is enacted

in different teachers' social practices; it comes to be lived each time students and teachers or teachers and teachers get together. Still, I think, there may be other opportunities of knowledge construction which we may not have explored yet. There may be a gap regarding how appropriation of knowledge by ELI teachers occur in real life.

The second reason why ELI teachers' knowledges is a relevant research topic for me is that while revising literature in ELT education, there appears to be a tension regarding the recognition of ELI teachers' actual knowledges. In the local academic community, for example, a critical evaluation of Colombia's Ministry of Education professional development policy for English language teachers by González (2007) affirmed that the policy does not recognize the locally produced knowledge. A similar assertion is found in Cárdenas' study of the nature of teachers' research in a professional development program (2004). One of the issues that disappointed teachers after they carried out research is that their voices were not considered when designing public policy and curriculum change. I wonder why? Is it that this knowledge is not legitimate? Cárdenas (2004) actually declares that research is site for hegemonic clash where teachers' knowledge appears to be silenced: "... research is in spaces of hegemonic dispute, of confrontation and disintegration of diverse actors in rivalry for domination. Such rivalry is due to the uninformed decision-making by those who hold power and the lack of awareness of teachers' proposals" (Cárdenas, 2004, p. 120) (Author's translation).

In a similar vein, Diaz-Maggioli (2012) poses that some professional development programs have an underlying premise that "teachers need to be fixed" (p. 2) and that premise hinders actual success in those programs. In fact, Díaz-Maggioli (2012) says that such programs are driven by the belief that students' failure to learn is because of the teachers' lack of knowledge on how to teach.

Given these ideas, I do believe there is a need to inquire about what is it that teachers know from a perspective that allows them voice as intellectuals who have been silenced (Apple, 2006). That way, we could possibly overcome the abyssal thinking (De Sousa Santos, 2007) which has policed the boundaries of what is considered teachers' *knowledge* and has decided what the *true* procedures, practices, contents, models, and discourses should be like in ELT grounding its epistemology within a static framework.

Finally, it appears to me that teachers' knowledges have historically been conceptualized from a modern vision of a fixed canon. I want to problematize such a frame by providing a poststructuralist, postcolonial, and South epistemological stance towards it. In this way, I align with Luke (2004) when

setting out the need to crack the dominant logic debate over ELI teachers' pedagogic knowledge. This type of knowledge is sometimes seen as composed of generic methods of universal efficiency (Magrini, 2014). In that sense, I do agree with the idea that English is an intellectual field that ought to dig into the "distinctive ways of knowing" (Luke, 2004, p. 90) which modern abyssal thought (De Sousa, 2007) in ELT has monopolized in just a few areas, such as content knowledge, methods knowledge, didactics knowledge and others.

Towards a (re) conceptualization of knowledge/knowledges

The quest for knowledge has been a human pursue ever since Plato (369 BCE). His tradition has been so strong that traces of such epistemological stance are still seen in current schools of thought. Some of his towering remarks are that knowledge is eternal and unchanging and that inquiry follows hypothetic-deductive paths, e.g. from a definition of something to elements that suit such a definition (Welbourne 2014, Goswami, 2007). Another salient contribution to a theory of knowledge by Plato (in Burnyeat, Myles, M. J. Levett, and Plato. 1990) was the explanation of the necessary conditions to say that something constitutes knowledge. Such conditions were belief, justification, and truth. The first (belief) should be considered because a person might not 'know' something if he/she does not believe in it. Justification provides a step towards knowledge in that it is the evidence of reason that provides support to a belief. The third condition is that the object of inquiry be true, that what we grasp as knowledge be true, and that it represents reality accordingly. With this final idea, one could wonder who defines what the truth is. Welbourne (2014, p. 125) asserts that in Plato's view, "the objective world is the essential domain of knowledge". Plato's contribution to education is undeniable, especially because we have built our epistemological grounds upon him. Certainly, an area of knowledge such as ELT has also abided by justified true beliefs. Tenets in regards professionalism, teaching methods, theories of learning have been constructed accordingly.

Mirochnik (2000), Siegel (2003), and Southerland et al (2001) make the case that we still conceptualize the world from Plato's perspective. Such a view could restrict our understanding of the world for different reasons. First his views that knowledge is something that exists prior to the epistemic beings, his assertion that the truth is what counts as real knowledge, his perspective that knowledge is eternal, pure and awaited to be discovered and his argument that knowledge requires evidence, all disempower humans because those are static views of the world that homogenize our *status quo* in it. Such standpoints, I

believe, also deny that knowing beings, namely teachers, have identities³⁰, previous experiences, or personal assumptions that shape their construction of knowledge. Therefore, a theory of knowledge like this one may fall short in accounting for knowledge conceptualization in a broader sense.

Particularly in ELT, the notion of what the truth is, has been perverse in that static views of what ELI teachers' knowledge ought to be like, permeates professional development programs with concepts such as teachers' knowledge base *must be* this, pedagogical content knowledge *is* that, teachers' declarative, experiential and procedural knowledge *must have* this and that. The use of these vocabularies underlines a canonic status of knowledge that must be admittedly followed by teachers. To exemplify this let us mention a couple of titles like "Essential Teacher Knowledge" (Harmer, 2012) or "Approaches and Methods in English Language Teaching" (Richards and Rodgers, third edition, 2014) whose basic aim is policing teaching from a colonial perspective of what it should mean to teach.³¹

With the flourishing 18th century Enlightenment project of strongly pursuing limitless material progress, modernity sold the idea that reason had to dominate and explain all phenomena while securing progress. The postmodernist mindset has attempted to break down this grand narrative (Sim and Van Loon, 2004). One of these currents of thought attempting to reconceptualize knowledge is poststructuralism, an epistemological standpoint and practice born in the 1960s, which challenges Plato's thought deeply.

Some of its founding remarks are skepticism towards knowledge and its limits, rejection of the authoritarianism of truth, criticism of the dependence on binary oppositions such as mind/body or self/other. About knowledge, poststructuralism questions the modern assumption that we can arrive at secure knowledge and that such knowledge is built based on norm. The ELT community has not escaped this modernist canon of norm either. Static models like *presentation-practice-production* or *engage, study, activate* known as safe paths to learners' attainment of knowledge ought to be re-studied. Any disruption like *practice-presentation-production*, in the modern order would mean error. In the case of teachers' knowledge, for example, a lack of attainment of the Common European Framework Standards in tests would entail a lack of knowledge of the subject matter. However, for poststructuralists, a disruption in the hegemonic order is an opportunity to study the periphery, a chance to decenter monolithic ideas. Thus, according to Williams (2014)

30 For an elaborate problematization on interactional identities, linguistic identities and teachers' constitution of identities see Lucero Bavativa, Arias Cepeda, and Davila Rubio respectively this volume.

31 For an extended discussion on Colonialism, see Castañeda-Trujillo, this volume.

disruptions are not negative but come to be the core. A view like this one favors greatly a re-conceptualization of teachers' knowledge because historically teachers have been conceptualized as recipients of alien knowledge, objects of imposed policy, reproducers of pre-packed practices (Giroux, 1997, Kumaravadivelu, 2003). A decentering/poststructural approach to teachers' knowledge is aimed at understanding ELI teachers' own appropriation, management, learning, or unlearning of knowledge. Given these ideas, I wonder: do teachers de-center from established truths in ELT? What sort of unnoticed knowledges circulate along hegemonic ELT knowledge? What disruptions circulate regarding knowledge construction?

Coming back to the topic of tipping points of Western epistemology, what could be said about knowledge within poststructuralism? Let's take Foucault's re-interpretation of the modern logic of thought. Foucault (1980) states that what turns out to be considered knowledge is defined by a historical convergence of connected elements, some of them are social constructions, e.g. normality. Certain knowledge has power to become the normal, the norm. Foucault's (1980) approach to knowledge is of critical-style in that it invites to re-think the categories of truth and power. The dyad power-knowledge ought to be simultaneously considered in epistemology because there is a relationship between power formations and recognized knowledges. Therefore, and bringing up Plato again, to justify a belief the category of power must be considered (Alcoff 2013). What comes out to be truth or knowledge is connected to who holds the power to say that something is considered as such. Let's take an example. Historically, what has come to be considered 'knowledge' in ELT has been conceptualized in a Eurocentric way. Such a standpoint, in Phillipson's perspective (1992) entails that foreign authorities have the right to say how to best teach English, when to start the teaching of English, the characteristics of teachers, and what sort of knowledge he/she ought to hold.

Foucault's (1980) view of power is not meant to be thought as monarchical, static rule, or rude domination. Power goes from person to person. It can be thought of subtle assignments of subjective roles or positions of power that go from human to human depending on the context (Feder, 2014). For example, in an ELT setting, a teacher could hold the institutional power of knowledge to help students construct their own knowledge of the English language. Simultaneously, the so-called "high achievers", may hold power (allocated by their own knowledge) to answer all the teacher's grammar/vocabulary questions constituting themselves as knowing agents.

Through the analysis of the historical conditions and their underlying assumptions, Foucault (1980) studies the themes of "breaks" and "obstacles"

within epistemology. Breaks refer to moments in which science deviates from conventional understandings of data and new understandings emerge. Obstacles are elements that prevent epistemological breaks. It appears that our own frames of current “truths” are taken as real and do not allow us to think outside the box. Why are these concepts of “breaks” and “obstacles” useful to conceptualize teachers’ knowledge? I think it is because within ELT, and particularly teachers’ education we never deviate from the normalized visions of *the must be, must have, and must do* discourses which have framed teachers’ education and professional development. Therefore, these above-mentioned concepts by Foucault (1980) invite us to deviate from current understandings of what ELI teachers’ knowledge must be like to dig into the normalized practices and visualize new understandings out of them.

Problematizing English Language Teachers’ Knowledge

In the extant literature, some typologies of teachers’ knowledge have been constructed. For example, Shulman (1987) framed some categories of pedagogical knowledge. He explains that, at least, teachers’ knowledge should include: a. general pedagogical knowledge, b. pedagogic content knowledge (how specific topics are suited for the students in terms of their diversity, interests, skills) c. special professional understanding of learners, groups, classrooms, d. educational ends and their philosophical and historical grounds. The sources of this set of knowledge are various, namely, the literature in each discipline, the institutionalized processes of knowledge, teachers’ own wisdom gained through practice. The author asserts that teachers convert understandings, skills, and attitudes into pedagogical representations. Teachers comprehend what is to be learned and how it should be taught. Shulman (1987) did acknowledge that teachers’ knowledge is much more than what has been described here and calls for a continuous re-interpretation of the above-mentioned categories. Hence, the present study aims at re-interpreting teachers’ knowledge from a perspective that takes hand of sociology (of absences and emergences, De Sousa Santos, 2007), epistemology (within a postmodern/poststructural/postcolonial spirit) and a socio-cultural approach to teaching.

Carr and Kemis (1983) cited in Richards & Nunan (1990) suggest that professionalism in an area is determined by the theoretical knowledge provided through established methods and procedures. Richards & Nunan (1990) drew on this idea to say that ELI teachers’ knowledge base is composed of linguistics, language theory, and practical components like methodology and practice. This area of knowledge has seen a progressive change in paradigm as to what counts as teacher’s knowledge. Teaching at first was based on

common sense knowledge. In the 50s, what counted as knowledge to teach English was theoretical grounds in grammar and pronunciation. Between the 70s and 90s the English teachers' theoretical basis expanded to knowledge of discourse analysis, second language acquisition, interlanguage, syntax, phonology, syllabus and curriculum design, as well as testing (Richards & Nunan, 1990). ELI teachers' knowledge was evaluated on the extent to which they suited the profile of a good teacher based on experts' opinions. Two more recent characterizations of teachers' knowledge -James, 2001 and Richards and Farrell, 2005- expand a lot more on what constitutes teachers' knowledge. James (2001) mentions a personal, a disciplinary, and an educational dimension of knowledge. The personal dimension refers to values, beliefs, and understandings that are constructed in the pedagogical practices. The disciplinary component embraces the didactics, and the knowledge base. He adds other elements such as development of skills in research, professional reading, theorization, attitudes as well as feelings. Richards and Farrell (2005) refer to knowledge of the subject matter to the areas of grammar, discourse analysis, phonology, evaluation, language acquisition, methodology, curriculum development, items already proposed in Richards & Nunan (1990). Richards and Farrell (2005) add ideas such as pedagogical knowledge that consists of ability to teach different populations. Within their perspective, teachers also understand new areas of teaching and experiences for the personal and professional advancement. With such a comprehensible set of knowledge pillars, one wonders what can be missing in the extant literature? Most likely, these authors tackled socio-cognitive components, still items like what the expertise of teachers is, the way the professional identity shapes teaching, the habitus, and the different forms of teachers' capitals (Bourdieu in Navarro, 2006) deserve some attention when conceptualizing ELI teachers' knowledge.

In a more recent and expanded view, Diaz-Maggioli (2012) addresses how teachers come to knowledge in ELT. The author states that teachers develop a specific knowledge that is enlightened by both personal and academic theories. Language turns out to be the object of learning because teachers make explicit their implicit knowledge. For him, the ELT field has a defined knowledge base that set criteria on "what teachers need to know and be able to do" (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012, p. 5). He also describes four traditions that have historically built teachers' knowledge appropriation: namely, look and learn, read and learn, think and learn, and participate and learn. In the first tradition, look and learn, there is a learner and a master. The learner gains a static body of procedural knowledge which is expected to be applied across contexts and to result in students' learning. The triumph lies in replicating methods and techniques provided by the master. This approach fosters the idea that there is one single way of knowing to teach, Díaz-Maggioli (2012) says.

The second tradition, read and learn, refers to having access to literature and research in ELT. The teacher knows theory and has access to a theoretical basis. This tradition also has a dogmatic emphasis in that what theory/research says is what teachers are expected to replicate in their classroom regardless the context. The third tradition, think and learn, suggests a change in the role of teachers from consumers of knowledge to producers of it by becoming researchers of their practices. This idea is backed up with Schön (1983) cited in Diaz-Maggioli (2012) when Schön (1983) explains that teachers' practices are the outcome of the relationship between their tacit knowledge and the teachers lived experience in the context of their teaching. By having a reflection upon their own practices, teachers make explicit what is implicit and can examine their knowledge. Thus, it can be assumed that teachers do create knowledge as they reflect upon their practices.

The last tradition that Diaz-Maggioli (2012) describes is participate and learn. It is framed within a socio-cultural perspective and does not restrict the sources of knowledge. Instead, this tradition (namely, participate and learn) aims at seeing knowledge as the result of a construction within a community of novice teachers and more experienced ones in which skills, knowledge, and dispositions are built and which characterize a community of practice. What I find puzzling here is the assumption that more novice teachers are learning from the more experienced ones. I wonder if that is experienced in such a way by real teachers. Could it be that teachers look for solitary opportunities of learning? Are novice teachers a source of knowledge for more experienced ones? What sort of participation in learning do teachers have? (look and learn? read and learn? participate and learn?)

A conceptualization of teachers' cognition in Borg (2006 cited in Díaz-Maggioli, 2012) suggests that teachers' knowledge base is composed of their thinking and decision-making. For Díaz-Maggioli (2012, p. 18) teacher knowledge is made of "principles, experiences, theories, dispositions, beliefs, skills, and actions that inform –directly or indirectly- teachers' experiential evolution in the classroom". However, it should be noted that teacher's knowledge is constantly evolving because it is framed within historical and social contexts. Traditionally we have framed teachers' knowledge as static seen in the traditions of "look and learn" and "read and learn". With "think and learn" and "participate and learn" we are moving to a more poststructuralist comprehension that needs to be carefully examined. For example, under what circumstances do teachers think and learn or participate and learn? What does it mean to come to knowledge these ways and how they have an impact in teachers' own epistemologies? If, as Maggiolo (2012, p. 18) states: "the more [teachers] interact, the more they evolve" How is it that it happens? How does teachers' knowledge evolve? Are teachers' 'folk theories' (Widschitl, 2004)

'unsophisticated understandings' that come to be polished up? (Diaz-Maggioli, 2012) These are some of the puzzles that inspire me to embark on the inquiry of teachers' knowledge.

A post-abysal thinking applied to ELT research in teachers' knowledges: My epistemological stance

Post-abysal thinking acknowledges the idea that our world is diverse. In fact, in what I have called up to now teachers' knowledge, the diversity is still underexplored. Hence, the epistemological stance that grounds my interest in finding out teachers' ecologies of knowledges is tied to two constructs: the sociology of absences and emergences (De Sousa Santos, 2007) and postcolonial thought. According to Kumaravivelu (2003) teachers have been primarily constructed as consumers of knowledge produced by experts. From a perspective of *absences*, this means that the knowledge teachers produce on their own is taken as not existing, irrelevant or perhaps incomprehensible. The visibility of the experts in ELT overshadows teachers' own forms of knowledging. I want to embark on a decentering effort to conceptualize teachers' knowledges as a sociology of emergence. What I mean is that exploring teachers' knowledges from teachers' own stance, expands the already exhausted perspective of framing teachers' knowledge base on disciplinary knowledge that concerns grammar, assessment, second language acquisition, curriculum development, pedagogical knowledge, or didactics to name but a few.

To this respect, Cárdenas et al (2010) argue that "a look at historical practices, since the beginning of applied linguistics, initial teachers' education and in-service qualification have undoubtedly relied on methodological aspects and the learning process, in short, how to qualify foreign language teaching. Still, teachers' knowledge base, its evolution, the initial knowledge and its continuity to in-service development has not been sufficiently tackled. In this train of thought, the more sophisticated concepts of teacher cognition (the authors cite Woods, 1996 and Borg 2006) what teachers think, know and believe have not received enough attention but are worth being studied within teachers' professional development processes" (Author's translation).

In that sense, post-abysal thinking recognizes that modern science continuously holds a tension between regulation and emancipation (De Sousa Santos, 2009). Everything considered scientific knowledge is regulated. This tension is also experienced in ELT which is a highly-regulated field, particularly teachers' professional development. Within the epistemology of absent knowledges, we deem necessary to identify the absent and the reason

for the absence. This is to say that by finding actual teachers' positionings (David and Harré, 1990)³² in certain knowledges I can aspire to have an expanded view of reality as the epistemology of the absences calls for finding out suppressed realities. If we take educational practices, say a classroom interaction or a teachers' reunion, they are social practices of knowledge within or outside the frame of the institution. Thus, both institutional and non-institutional knowledges simultaneously interconnect. The epistemology of absences, where I feel comfortable locating this analysis, asks for the voices of the absent agents and demands listening to subjectivities historically silenced.

In the same train of thought, this inquiry is also epistemologically grounded in postcolonial thought since it aims at scrutinizing the ideological load of mainstream ELT and the effect of its grand narratives over local teachers to dismantle the belief that knowledge production does not occur in this part of the world. In this way, I could possibly contribute to overcoming Eurocentrism and particularly in ELT, Anglo centrism. As Fals Borda and Mora (2003) said there is need to break with the ignorance we have about ourselves and reconsider framing ELT education within an Anglo standard that contains faulty beliefs towards the universality of its causes and methods of action, significantly favoring the interests of Western theorizing.

From Knowledge to Knowledges

In this enquiry, I want to appropriate the word *knowledges* as opposed to *knowledge* in singular because I agree with De Sousa Santos (2009) when stating that we should move from the Western canon of knowledge (which has one single way at looking at time and social classification, naturalizes hierarchies, and has a productivity driven mind-set) to an ecology of knowledges whose intention is to allow a more dynamic or dialectic relationship between scientific knowledge and other ways of knowing. An ecology is about recognizing how plural and heterogenous knowledges are and the need for a respectful interrelation among them (De Sousa Santos, 2007).

Approaching personal epistemologies locally

Within the ecology on knowledges, I believe, there is also space for what has been termed as personal epistemologies. This concept refers to the study of "how individuals come to know, the beliefs they hold about knowing and how these ideas shape practices of knowing and learning" (Hofer, 2000, p. 378). It appears that people hold beliefs about knowledge and knowing

32 For a comprehensible understanding of positioning in ELT see Samacá-Bohorquez, this volume.

that comprise epistemological theories. What is interesting about this theme is that the concept of personal epistemologies waves between the tensions of modernism and poststructuralism in that people seem to adjust their knowledges along a continuum which I will describe below.

Perry (1970) in Hoffer (2000) indicated the path students followed towards meaning-making in their academic trajectories. In Perry's study (1970), students experienced knowledge first through a binary stance towards knowledge: self/other, good/evil, etc. but then they evolved to a pluralistic view of knowledge (one thing may be as possible as another), afterwards they had a view of knowledge towards relativism (knowledge as dependent and contextual). For Hofer (2000) there are two areas that comprise personal epistemology: the nature of knowledge (what knowledge is for a person) and the nature of the process of knowing (how the person gets to know). The two dimensions are composed of other two: *nature of knowledge* which is related to certainty of knowledge and simplicity of knowledge. *The nature of the process of knowing* is connected to sources of knowledge and justification of knowledge. Certainty of knowledge, Hofer (2000) says, is the extent to which one sees knowledge as "fixed or more fluid". It appears that within lower levels of development in an area, absolute truths are treated with certainty. In higher levels of development, knowledge "is tentative and evolving". The item of "simplicity of knowledge" evolves from facts that are interconnected to knowledge that is highly contextual. About the *source of knowledge*, the evolution goes from thinking of knowledge as originated outside the self -in, for example, authorities- to conceptualizing the self as a knower who constructs with others. "*Justification for knowing*", Hofer (2000) states, is about evaluating knowledge claims using criteria like authority, expertise, or inquiry. At one end of the continuum, one might explain knowledge relying on authority and expertise, then at a higher level of development, one could use inquiry. Hofer's (2000) perspectives may be arguable in that knowledge may not necessarily be a continuum but it is individuals who in-situ decide a positioning towards sources of knowledge and how they experience knowledge themselves. Still, the study of personal epistemologies as part of teachers' ecologies of knowledges has an important role in that these previously explained dimensions may be hidden pillars of explicit knowledges teachers build. By accounting for personal epistemologies as founding pillars in ELI teachers' knowledges I can get to explore how teachers' knowledge evolve from authority to inquiry (if that is so) or what the sources of teachers' knowledges are.

What do teachers actually say about their own knowledges?

In what follows, I will introduce two types of empirical evidence which problematize knowledge in ELT. These are teachers' response towards how

their knowledge has been conceptualized by “experts” and their own remarks towards their knowledge. The first pieces of evidence come from a set of reflection questions sent to 13 acquaintances’ emails in November 2016 (partners, colleagues and ex-colleagues, see appendix 1). I designed these questions based on what I read in terms of the epistemology of the south (De Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009), post-method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and tensions found in the literature towards the recognition of teachers’ knowledges (Cárdenas, 2004, Cárdenas *et al.*, 2010, González, 2007). Four ELI teachers out thirteen replied the email with their reflections. I will also present an analysis of two ELI teachers’ conversation about their classes (data that were collected for an initiative in action research on peer-coaching in May 2016 at a Colombian private university context).

Teachers’ profiles

Three female and one male teacher responded a series of questions (see appendix 1). Each teacher has around 8 years of experience in the teaching of English (names are pseudonyms). The first teacher, Eileen, has not graduated from undergrad school in English Teaching yet but has worked at language centers. The second teacher, Marcela, holds a B.A in Spanish and English, M.A in Applied Linguistics, and works as a teacher educator. The third teacher, Aleida, holds a B.A in Bilingual Education and has worked in language centers; she is currently pursuing M.A in TESOL in the U.S. as a Fulbright grantee. Carlos holds a B.A in English teaching, has worked as a teacher, supervisor, fellowship program trainer and currently directs an extension program. He holds a master’s degree in education.

Teachers’ knowledge is called into question, cases for the sociology of absences and emergences

The next text though is not part of the data from teachers in my study is a starting point for what I am going to claim.

Paula Andrea: A student used a mistake I made to say I wasn’t prepared enough to teach.

One of the reasons why I want to research the topic of teachers’ knowledges has to do with the many cases in which teachers’ knowledges are called into question institutionally. For so long, I have heard anecdotes from my colleagues about situations which undermined their status of knowledgeable beings. Here is what Paula Andrea says:

“I remember one personal experience in which a student used a mistake I made in a power point presentation to point out and say that I was not prepared enough to teach that class. Although at that moment, I frowned. I must confess that once I left the classroom, I cried. From that moment on, I have tried to be very accomplished in everything I produce, publish, and present” Paula Andrea’s blog. (Author’s translation)

Paula Andrea’s knowledge was called into question by one of her students. She had written an objective for her class, different from the one proposed by the book. Although all people make mistakes and others can pin-point them for improvement, there are cases in which, because of the load of the institutional discourses, teachers may end up believing that they are incapable of constructing and changing their own knowledge (Kincheloe et al 1999). This was not particularly Paula Andrea’s case. Instead, she positions (Davis and Harré 1990) herself as a teacher who produces knowledge, publishes and presents. After reading Paula Andrea’s story, one could wonder: what is the knowledge that Paula Andrea produces? What does she publish and present?

Marcela: They told me that what I had designed was not worth of a pre-service teacher level

I think teachers, especially, are many times called into question by students, other colleagues or superiors. One experience I remember was when I started working at XXX University with pre-service teachers. I had to work with two more teachers in the testing creation process and I was assigned the listening exam. They had been working at that place for long and had lots of experience. I designed the exam by using the knowledge of testing (which was really reduced at that time) I had. After my colleagues revised it, they talked to me and told me that what I had designed was not worth of a pre-service teacher level and that I needed to reconsider my knowledge on testing if I really wanted to stay working there. I remember I questioned myself about not knowing something as planning a test, which is part of the teaching main knowledge. I felt angry and bad some days after, but then, I decided to go and talk to them and tell them to help me. They gave me some directions, and that has been one of the most priceless pieces of information I have gained in my disciplinary knowledge. (SIC)

What is interesting out of Marcela’s narrative event is that the comment by colleagues meant a tipping point for her to construct knowledge about testing. This experience followed the path of more experienced teachers introducing the more novice one into knowledge (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012) What one might wonder then is: what sort of knowledge does Marcela cultivate to construct

tests? How has that knowledge evolved? What does Marcela think of testing epistemologically speaking?

Eileen: My knowledge was rarely required.

Eileen makes the case that some institutions give teachers the expected parameters their classes should have:

“When I worked at informal language institutes, my knowledge as teachers was rarely required as they gave me their class parameters and I had to follow them as they were stated.” SIC

This small reflection leads to the question: how, what De Sousa (2009) calls “the invisible” (the assets teachers bring to their classes that are not considered) co-exists with the institutionalized norm of standardized practices and knowledge.

Carlos: the envoy...argued she couldn't believe how a young teacher like me could perceive learning in such terms.

“I remember many experiences in which I felt that my knowledge as a teacher was called into question. It has happened to me especially when I am dealing with education administrators (say the head of a school, the director of a university department) or a policy maker (say envoys of the Ministry of Education).

I remember one specific event in which an envoy of the Ministry of Education was telling us how to organize an English language lesson and asked us if we (the teachers) considered memorizing a valid technique for teaching English. Every teacher in the room reacted by saying that memorizing was an old-fashioned technique that had proven to be useless. However, I reacted by saying that despite the fact everyone was disregarding memory as an important factor in language learning I dared to say that memory was more important than one can imagine; if we consider that information processing models have long argued that learning occurs only when information is used and rehearsed repeatedly until it becomes part of the human long term memory storage. Even though I cited the authors of a couple of information processing models, the envoy was simply astonished at my argument and argued she couldn't believe how a young teacher like me could perceive learning in such terms.

She was not alone, most of the audience looked quite puzzled with my ideas and decided to continue providing opinions that were more aligned and celebrated by the Ministry envoy.

My reaction was, by far, of frustration as I felt that some discourses have gained so many roots in education that they can make a process look completely diabolic, even if you happen to find some theoretical support for it. (SIC)

Carlos' narrative shows that there was an institutional discourse enacted in the authority of the Ministry envoy who did not consider memorization as an appropriate learning experience. Carlos' knowledge although backed up with theory in information processing models was not acknowledged. On the contrary, he looked like having dated knowledge for a person his age. However, what one wonders is how Carlos' personal epistemology accommodates with institutionally mandated knowledge.

While reading Paula Andrea's, Eileen's, Carlos' and Marcela's stories, not only questions show up. Absences and emergences are intertwined ideas that come across because events that appear to be the natural and common place in teaching hide meanings. Thus, this project aims at reclaiming this sort of knowledges that have been called into question.

To the question: do you think teachers are recognized as intellectuals? Why? Why not? Marcela and Carlos mention a lot of thought-provoking ideas that permit us dig into the intersection of personal reflection, societal recognition and the contribution of ELT to the broader society on the one hand and some support towards the study of teachers' ecology of knowledges, on the other. Let's start with Carlos:

"Generally, English teachers are not perceived as intellectuals for many reasons, I am going to try to list some reasons that, in my opinion, might prevent the academic community from believing in English teachers' intellectual capabilities:

1. English teaching was formally recognized as a profession very recently and it has not matured enough.
2. People tend to believe that teaching English is a mere act of translating words and pronouncing a group of sounds appropriately.
3. The epistemology of English teaching has resorted to other disciplines because knowledge of the field is still dependent on fields such as psychology and pedagogy in a great deal.
4. Social recognition of teaching professionals is extremely poor. Someone in this field is perceived to have chosen this profession as a desperate last choice.

5. English teaching is not believed to be an area that can contribute to the development of any other field of knowledge.
6. The spread of English teaching institutions that employ low-cost workers as teaching professionals have contributed to creating a simplistic image of what's implied by the process of teaching a language.
7. Research results in the area might end up being a bit too ethereal for a society driven and crazy for ready-to-use and "practical" knowledge.
8. It's believed that a good software can actually produce better learners and learnings than those in the English classroom."
(Carlos, reflection)

Carlos' reflection sheds light on the need to investigate teachers' ecology of knowledges in various ways. Given his assertion that English teaching is not believed to contribute to other fields of knowledge, this project attempts to plant a seed towards a contribution of English teaching to the field of epistemology in ELT and possibly to sociology. Carlos also mentions that this profession is still in 'its teenage years' so to speak. Consequently, if the ELT profession is to mature, studies towards a configuration of how knowledge is experienced by ELT professionals, framed in a bottom-up perspective, are required.

On the other hand, Marcela comments on the fact that being an intellectual is thought of as a stereotype. Marcela appears to be acquainted with Giroux's (1997) concept of teachers as intellectuals who commit with social change. Here, some reasons to study the ecology of teachers' knowledges can be inferred.

In the context of B.A degrees where I have been lately working, I think it depends on the subjects you teach, students consider you're an intellectual or not. If you teach research, didactics, methodology, pedagogy, practicum or any related field, they might consider you an intellectual. But, if you teach the language class, they tend to see you just as the English teacher. Obviously, in places where we just teach English to other careers, those students do not see you as an intellectual. I think it happens because in people's imaginary studying or teaching languages is not an important career, a career that gives you too much money or that you can be on a par with Law or engineering. Also, as teaching a language many times has been reduced to teach structures and vocabulary, students do not see how a teacher who doesn't teach 'content' could be an intellectual. Finally, I think in our country we might have a misconception of what an intellectual is because many

people think that this kind of people are the ones who wear satchel, read a lot, and speak about certain topic and have certain behaviors; this actually takes us to conclude that intellectuals might be seen as stereotypes, and not as Giroux defines them. (Marcela, SIC)

It can be inferred from Marcela's words that the prestige of the English teacher is not the same as that of someone who teaches content because seemingly teaching English does not entail as much intellectual effort as teaching theory. In the broader context of society teaching does not pay off compared to other professions (item that was also brought up by Carlos), Marcela also mentions how the instrumental component of teaching has posed a major threat to the profession as it has been reduced to teaching language structures. The study of teachers' ecology of knowledges sets a precedent that teaching goes beyond the surface of structures, instructions, lessons, or testing and that it gives room to the co-existence of scientific and other forms of knowledges that play a role in the act of teaching.

Aleida, on the other hand, considers herself to be an intellectual but warns that she could not assure others consider teachers as intellectuals. She has a pedagogical perspective that poses responsibility on the teacher to be named intellectual. Those who have a sort of instrumental interest in the language are teachers, in plain English. But others might be called educators as they intend to go beyond the structural surface towards a practical interest or an emancipatory one in Grundy's words (1987).

I recognize myself as intellectual in the sense that I intend to educate students even when I teach them a second language. I want them to reflect on social issues that affect all of us. I do this because I have read, analyzed, reflected, thought about a great number of things while pursuing my studies. Those are things I would have never come to think if I had not entered the academy.

I cannot assure English teachers are recognized as intellectuals. It'd depend on the kind of teacher you are. Are you the type that cares only about teaching the language? Or do you go beyond language? Do you really care about the human beings in the classroom? Do you feel you have a role to play in educating good citizens? Do you give them food for thought? If the answer is yes, then your students could say you're an intellectual. If the answer is no, you might be just an English teacher.

Aleida places a major responsibility on teachers' shoulders to be called intellectuals. Teachers might probably be doing all these things she is calling for: being careful about the humans that are in a class or educating citizens, but it is perhaps through research in teachers' knowledges that we can account for these issues as enacted in the real life. Systematizing experiences into the

co-existence of different knowledges could be a path towards recognition of teachers as intellectuals.

Enactments of teachers' knowledges, a talk among colleagues.

The next is an excerpt of a transcribed longer conversation between Carlos Andrés and David. They both hold a degree in English philology. Carlos Andrés is also doing M.A in English teaching. They both participated in a teacher-proposed project of peer-coaching whose intention was to share, analyze, and suggest ideas about each other's teaching after observing a lesson. The conversation was recorded by themselves after David visited Carlos Andrés' lesson. Before the current extract, they were talking about the problem of having a small TV in the classroom because the font in the slide could not be seen properly and they needed to reduce the amount of words. Here David asks some questions to Carlos Andres and both share their knowledge of methodology, and the personal epistemologies behind their teaching.

- David: and to, to reduce the like the amount of information on, yeah I know because it happens to me sometimes. Uh... And also I wanted to highlight well, in, in the part of the grammar, the, the part you were having, having them create like a grammar chart somehow and at the end you elicit the examples, the rules, the structures, uhh... so my question is why did you decide to do it this way?
- Carlos Andrés: the, the way that.... first the, the, the, the, they took the papers they recycled the information, is that because uh, I wanted to check if they, they had, they had done the class preparation, right? They compared if they had understood what they did and then recycle like a part of the assessment alright? Grammar assess, grammar assessment.
- D: oh right, that was, so assessment was the...
- C: to check if they understood or not, consider the use, the structure, etc. etc. and they, they were expected to give and to provide a kind of information examples, etc. etc.
- D: yeah, I ask you because I face like the same dilemma, sometimes when I do that, I feel that I, uh, I don't know, increase the speaking, the, the teacher speaking time, and from, I don't know, from a different point of view it could be like a little bit teacher-centered so what I decided to do is uhm... ok, have we have, we are applying the strategy of "creating your own grammar chart", you complete the grammar chart but then I show you a slide, I show them a slide with the grammar chart finished or an example that some I rese., resemble the work that they have done and... doing that, we probably save time and, avoid the part in which I have to go to the board and speak and listen and that part in which maybe, probably uh... becomes like teacher-centered, what do you think?
- C: well, it could be yeah, but, eh,, m, I don't know if, if, you notice that the idea was not to explain the grammar but is just to recycle a kind of

information etc. eh, of course I try to help, help them eh, write, write some kind of examples etc. etc. but yeah, sure I try to eh, uh, I, I try to like ah force them right? To, to give me the most of the information that was expected for the gram, for the assessment, purposes of the grammar chart.

- D: oh, right.
- C: that was the, that was the idea.
- D: oh, right, so the assessment was somehow implicit so probably, I, I, I didn't notice but was my mistake.
- C: exactly, I, I, I, I didn't want, I didn't want to explain the grammar chart but just to recycle the information and try to help them, eh... check what they have or haven't understood from that, from that chart.
- D: like, like group assessment
- C: exactly.
- D: ah ok, and at the end you used something like uh well something there's a detail that I'm am overlooking and it's what you used, to using that reports, using the foamy ball to mingle them to have them interact, I haven't figured out how to use the foamy ball with adults, but you, you told me how. And I want to mention something, something I was relating to the way you assess the objectives at the end of the class using...cards which I think is an amazing idea and is very like, interactive, and it's not like the, the uh common yes/no question at the end; it's more engaging and I like very much. So I want to ask you: where did you get the idea?...
- C: Actually, that was one of the, the tools that some of the, of my professor from, uh, uh, from the masters, and actually for my, for my uh degree ask me to use, alright, and there are many sources that you are going to use like a part of assessment. Something that eh, you didn't, you didn't eh, see from my, from my class that was the other, the, the last activity, that I wanted to check the grammar part, the grammar part with, with exercises, so they had to make decisions based on some exercises, some like quiz, and they have to make decisions of A or B etc. etc. but I couldn't, I couldn't do [it].

This excerpt shows mostly Carlos Andrés canonical knowledge of English teaching methodology and pedagogical principles which to some extent, as he expressed, comes from his M.A studies, and probably from the philosophy of the institution he works for. He displays his knowledge of classroom techniques to grasp students' responses like eliciting questions, asking for homework. His teacher knowledge concerning learning strategies is evidenced in his use of checking understanding, recapitulating ('recycling' previous knowledge from learners). He also holds the idea that students' knowledge ought to be assessed. That is, there is need to check how much the students have learned based on the creation of student's own grammar chart. About David, he holds the idea that the classroom is an opportunity for students to speak and thus,

he is concerned with his teacher- talking time. His pedagogical knowledge suggests that in the lesson he should minimize teacher-centeredness. From their conversation, it can be concluded that they hold a view of knowledge that could be considered constructivist in that a teacher is focused on students' understanding by creating their own of examples. Another relevant component is the interest in avoiding the teacher takes over the class as the only knowledgeable agent. Here some personal epistemologies may be seen intertwined with canonical knowledge of ELT. How do these two interrelate within teachers' knowledge base or in a more poststructural view in teachers' ecologies of knowledges? This is one conundrum, among many others I have wondered about through this document. Therefore, and based on what I have said so far, I will pose my research interest in the next section.

Statement of the research interest

Elsewhere in this paper I have given an account of some assertions towards tensions between teachers' actual knowledges and their knowledges recognition in policy making and curriculum change (González, 2007, Cárdenas, 2004) Similarly, I have quoted Díaz-Maggioli (2012) in his remark that oftentimes professional development programs rely on the assumption that there is something wrong with teachers' knowledge and they need some sort of fixing disregarding the fact that teachers may truly become intellectuals (Apple, 2006). I have also brought to this chapter the concept of abyssal thinking (De Sousa Santos, 2007) which is the kind of epistemology that does not acknowledge other views of the world but its own.

Consequently, as De Sousa Santos (2009) states living in Europe or North America is not the same as living in let's say Colombia. Reality is different. The world is diverse. Thus, it is not good to monopolize the world in one single universal theory of knowledge. A single, general theory cannot account for the plurality of the world. Therefore, plural ways of knowing need to be furthered explored. This claim may also be extended to teachers' knowledges. There may be many knowledges teachers construct that scholars are not aware of because historically they have not been explored or have been silenced as teachers have been constructed as recipients of alien knowledge, objects of imposed policy, reproducers of pre-packed practices (Giroux, 1997, Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Considering the afore-mentioned ideas and the pieces of evidence from 6 teachers' voices on their tensions, assumptions, assertions and concerns, I set out to explore the next research question and objectives:

Research Question

How do English in-service teachers relate to their ecologies of knowledges?

Objectives

1. Identify the ways in which different knowledges interact in teachers' repertoires and practices.
2. Explore the different sources of knowledge construction and circulation.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I aimed at configuring the need for applying epistemological/cognitive justice as De Sousa Santos (2009) calls it, to the state of things within the English language teaching profession. I hope I have made myself clear in the attempt to contextualize, ground, and empirically support a researchable situation. I envision an outstanding contribution of this project to the ELT field, advancing the extant literature in ELI teachers' professional development, teachers' cognition and personal epistemologies. Likewise, this project also has a poststructuralist emancipatory spirit in that it is intended to reach a small-scale transformation in the local context in relation to configuring English language teachers as intellectuals.

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Dear Colleague

I am trying to back up my research question: what's teachers' knowledge? And I need some empirical evidence.

Name

Degrees

Years of experience

Question 1

What knowledge(s) have you gained as a professional? How have you gained it (them)? Do you share your knowledge(s)? if so, how?

Question 2

Do you remember experiences in which your knowledge as a teacher was called into question? How did it happen? How did you react?

Question 3

Do you think English teachers are recognized as intellectuals? Why/Why not?

Consent Form

I hereby authorize Adriana Castañeda Londoño to use this information for research purposes in the PhD in Education ELT Major towards backing up the research proposal.

Name_____ ID_____