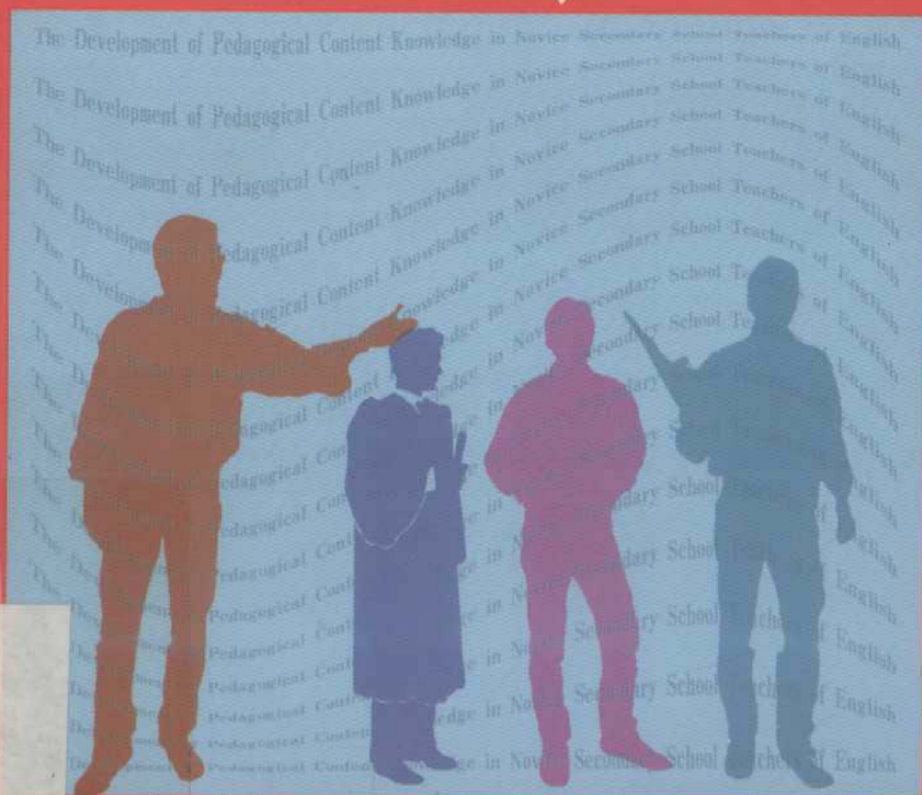


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The Development of Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Novice Secondary School Teachers of English

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朱晓燕◎著
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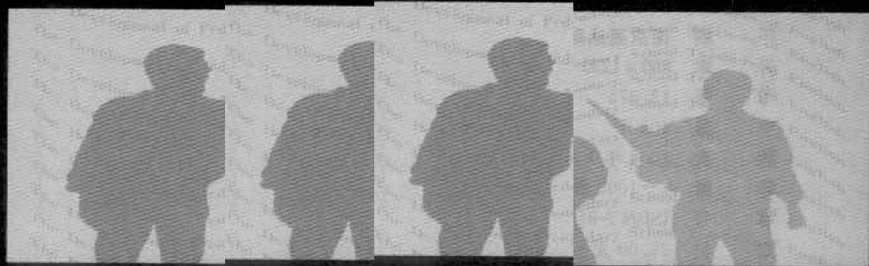
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Abstract

This study investigates pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) development in four novice EFL teachers during their second or third years of teaching in Guangzhou, PRC. Although research on PCK began in the late 1980s, most studies have centred on either expert or student teachers/first-year teachers, and have captured snapshots of PCK at a certain point in their subjects' teaching careers. Few have researched PCK growth longitudinally.

The present study mainly explores how teachers' PCK evolves during their early years of teaching, and identifies a trigger for PCK development. The research is content-specific (teaching of EFL), context-specific (Guangzhou), and subject-specific (novices beyond their first year of teaching). It uses an analytical framework adapted from Shulman (1986, 1987); Grossman (1990, 1995) and Turner-Bisset (1999, 2001), which focuses on six components of PCK: conceptions of teaching purposes, knowledge of curriculum, subject matter knowledge, knowledge of students, knowledge of pedagogy, and knowledge of self.

This qualitative research employs multiple case studies for in-depth study. The four informants were deliberately selected. They had completed their pre-service and induction teacher education programmes and were members of the first generation of Chinese secondary teachers of English required to implement the newly-promoted communicative language teaching (CLT) under the new English curriculum launched in 1992. The data collected from the four teachers between July 1999 and June 2002 included 14 lesson plans, 17 videotaped lessons, 22 written

reflections and 27 semi-structured interviews.

The results indicate that the four novices experienced a gradual transition from a firmly teacher-oriented to a slightly learner-oriented perspective. This transition was marked in the teachers concerned by a steady shift from a technique-based to a student-based understanding of teaching; from unquestioning implementation to initial reflection, and from a rigid to a slightly flexible pedagogy. Their change was characterized by an ongoing, uneven and unstable progression in their learning-to-teach experiences.

The significance of the study is that different forms of PCK emerge over time. At the outset, the six elements are in a rather rudimentary and separate state of development. Context-free knowledge of pedagogy, superficial knowledge of students and limited curricular knowledge are most in evidence, but relate to each other at a fairly superficial level. This relationship deepens over time. Analysis of the data suggests that knowledge of students plays an important role in triggering PCK development and integration.

This study argues that the teachers' PCK develops out of the contextualised conceptualizations of their understanding of students and teaching, professional learning and reflective practice, and that there is a dialectical relationship between their developing PCK and the context within which they work. In the PRC context, novice teachers have the opportunity to benefit from in-service learning activities both within and across schools, including demonstration lessons, teaching competitions, a mentoring system, observations and evaluation of colleagues' lessons. It is argued that these are possible sources for PCK development, in addition to pre-service programmes which are already indicated in the literature.

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This present research would not have been possible without cooperation from four novice secondary school teachers of English in Guangzhou. My cordial thanks extends to them in this multi-case study: Betty, Jenny, Peter and Sandy (all pseudonyms), who invested their time and effort in this project for three years. Their participation and engagement was crucial to the achievement of the study. Although their real names were not presented in this thesis, their important contributions cannot be over-emphasized.

Whenever I recall this intellectual journey from its commencement to this end, I am always thankful to have received a great deal of assistance from numerous academic staff in the Faculty (e. g. Paul Morris, Amy Tsui and Mark Bray) and distinguished visiting scholars from Sweden (Ferenc Marton); the USA (Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman); the UK (Marion Williams); Canada (Max van Manen); New Zealand (John Hatti) and Mainland China (Wen Qiufang and Gu Lingyuan). They have explicitly given me their enthusiastic encouragement, research guidance and professional concern. On

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Abbreviations

ALM	The Audiolingual Method
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CCP	The Chinese Communist Party (now in Mainland China)
CNP	The Chinese National Party (now in Taiwan Province)
DM	The Direct Method
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
GEC	Guangzhou Education Commission
GTM	The Grammar Translation Method
GTU	Guangzhou Teacher University
GZ	The city of Guangzhou (another name is Canton)
GZEJET	Guangzhou Experimental Junior English Textbooks
JEFC	Junior English for China (a set of current national unified textbooks)
L2	The Second Language
NECS	National English Curriculum Standard
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PCKg	Pedagogical Content Knowing
PEP	People's Education Press (Beijing)
PPP	Presentation, Practice, Production (a traditional sequence in ELT teaching)
SEFC	Senior English for China (a set of current national uniform textbooks)
SMK	Subject Matter Knowledge
TLA	Teacher Language Awareness

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to outline an overview of this doctoral thesis by laying emphases on various subject matters embedded in the following nine chapters. It, therefore, functions as a guide to show the whole picture of this academic journey.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Between 1990 and 1999 I worked at Guangzhou Teachers' University (GTU) as a tutor responsible for the English methods courses and the teaching practicum. Being involved in English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education programmes for both pre-service and in-service teachers in Guangzhou, I obtained a great deal of access to various English classes given by novice teachers with varying years of teaching experience.

By means of numerous lesson observations over the years, I noticed that novice English teachers normally grew into two different orientations within several years of teaching. The minority continued to try communicative language teaching (CLT) with a focus on both language forms and functions, while the majority adopted the more traditional didactic and form-focused teaching practice, even though they had all been taught CLT in the similar methods courses I was involved in. This gave rise to my thinking—what critical factors were involved with their different orientations, and what specific aspects needed to be revised both in the current methods courses and the teaching practicum. The questions that kept coming to my mind in relation to each beginning teacher I was observing in the classroom were: How did s/he develop in that particular way?

What had caused her/his changes in pedagogy since her or his graduation? What were the major factors influencing those changes? Since the answers to these questions would shed light on both pre-and in-service teacher education, I decided to investigate novice teachers' pedagogical development during their initial years of teaching.

The first move I took was conducting a questionnaire survey in eight sample secondary schools in Guangzhou with the help of the Guangzhou Education Commission (GEC) in 1998 (Zhu and Huang, 1999). The results showed that over 50 percent of novice teachers claimed that they were conducting CLT. However, their inner conceptions and practice could not be examined from this survey. I therefore, as a second step, undertook this present qualitative multiple case study to further examine the process of development of several novice teachers' conceptions and practice over an extended period.

1.2 Contextual Background

The PRC is a multi-racial republic, where the Han people form the largest group. The Han language (Putonghua) is the state-mandated official language. The public school system is patterned after the American 6-3-3 mode, namely, six years of primary schools for children from 6 to 12, three years of junior secondary schools for students from 13 to 15 and another three years of senior secondary schools for students from age 16 to 18 (Li, Zhang and Liu, 1988).

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the English language has been withdrawn and reinstated several times in the uniform English curriculum for secondary schools in response to various political movements. Until recently English was mandatory starting mainly in the junior secondary schools and it was not until 2001 that the starting grade dropped to the third year in primary schools under the New English Curriculum Standards issued by People Education Press (PEP, 2001). The aim of the English

curriculum for the junior and senior schools has shifted in the past five decades from fostering only “reading comprehension competence” to its current broader and integrated aim—“initial English language production for communication” (PEP, 1992, 1993). The organization of textbooks accordingly changed from their former structural-base to incorporating a notional/functional-base. The desired teaching method has therefore demanded to shift from the didactic approach to CLT (Hu, 2002). Under such circumstances, novice English teachers have experienced great pressure within a challenging context since they were taught in the conventional mode themselves.

Guangzhou, a southern city, was built in the Han dynasty about 2,200 years ago, and in recent years it has become a major commercial and trade centre because of its proximity to Hong Kong and Macau. Although it is a relatively rich-input environment with better technology and more exposure to foreign inputs through the media, EFL teaching in Guangzhou secondary schools has had considerable similarities with some other parts of the country due to a highly centralised educational system with uniform syllabuses, textbooks, a nation-wide entrance examination. Although novice secondary English teachers in Guangzhou met with similar difficulties to those which their counterparts were confronted with in other parts of the country, it would be dangerous to generalize the findings of this study, which is firmly based in the single city of Guangzhou, to the PRC as a whole. A more detailed background is given in Chapter 3, Background.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

The present study falls within the theme of research on novice teacher development with a focus on teacher professional knowledge. In the third edition of *Handbook on Research on Teaching*, Munby, Russell and Martin (2001) in their work entitled “Teachers’ Knowledge and How It Develops” point out

that:

The category "teachers' knowledge" is new in the last 20 years, and the nature and development of that knowledge is only beginning to be understood by the present generation of researcher in teaching and teacher education (p. 877).

The literature on novice teacher professional development in the past few decades has mainly concentrated on five aspects: teacher concerns (e. g. Fuller, 1969); expert-novice comparisons (e. g. Berliner, 1988); the stages of development (e. g. Calderhead, 1987); teacher thinking and teacher knowledge (e. g. Fenstermacher, 1994); and reflective practice (e. g. Korthagen, 2001). Within the topic of teacher thinking and teacher knowledge, there has been growing attention on one particular form of teacher knowledge: pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which has been regarded as a special province of a teacher who integrates various knowledge bases and makes teaching accessible to students (e. g. Shulman, 1986, 1987). PCK has been regarded as a constituent of teaching expertise in expert teachers, which takes considerable time to develop in the actual teaching practice.

In spite of the fact that a large number of studies have explored teacher development in social, cognitive, affective, intellectual, behavioural and attitudinal aspects, there are some identifiable gaps. Firstly, while most researchers have sought to capture glimpses of PCK at a specific point in a teacher's career, fewer seem to trace the process of PCK development longitudinally. Secondly, far fewer studies (e. g. Richards and Nunan, 1990) are found to be concerned with EFL teachers compared with first language teachers. Thirdly, studies on teacher education in the PRC (e. g. Liu, 1994) are rare. Given the scarcity of the literature on PCK development among novice teachers in their initial years of teaching, this subject-specific, teaching-period-specific and context-specific empirical study has

been designed to fill the gap. The framework of PCK is presented in Chapter 2. Literature Review.

1.4 Focus of Research

The main purpose of this study is to examine the process of novice EFL teachers' development in PCK in their second and third years of teaching in Guangzhou. A richer, deeper and fuller understanding is sought by attempting to produce some hypothesised models of PCK development and to identify the trigger for such development. Although these models are tentative, they will serve as a potential framework for evaluating novice teacher development in some other contexts as well.

The present research, by means of the multiple case studies, investigates the cases of four secondary novice teachers' English language teaching over a period of time. The main and sub-research questions posed for this study are as follows:

How does the PCK of four novice secondary English teachers develop during their initial years of teaching?

- What do their responses, as found before, during and after their lessons, reveal about their thinking over time?
- Why do they plan and conduct their teaching in particular ways?
- What do changes identified over time indicate about their PCK? What might trigger their PCK development?
- How does their professional learning affect their overall development?

The four techniques used for data collection in this study were semi-structured interviews, videotaped lesson observation, informants' lesson plans and written reflections, which were conducted from July 1999 to June 2002. Data analyses were undertaken mainly in two stages throughout: within cases and across cases. The details of the research design are explained in Chapter 4, Methodology; and the four case reports are presented from Chapter 5 to 8.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study offers some potential contributions to our knowledge of novice teacher professional development, which is related to teacher thinking, teacher knowledge and teacher learning. By drawing from the data of this empirical study, this thesis identifies several stages and a trigger for developing PCK. Meanwhile, the analysis of this study enhances our understanding of novice teacher concerns by adding to the three indicated in the current literature: self-concerns, teaching concerns and student concerns. Finally, the present research also shows that several approaches of in-service teachers' professional learning closely relate to novice EFL teachers' PCK development apart from the formal teacher education programmes. The implications of this study are expected to shed light on both the pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. For the former, this refers to the subject-specific methods courses and the teaching practicum; for the latter, it includes the induction and continuing education programmes. A detailed discussion of the implications is given in Chapter 9, Discussion. Meanwhile, some major findings, conclusions and implications drawn from this study are provided in Chapter 10, Conclusions.